

Availability of School-Based Resources and Supports

Key Findings

- Just over 6 in 10 LGBTQ students attended a school that had a Gay-Straight Alliance or Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) or similar student club that addressed LGBTQ issues in education.
- Approximately 1 in 5 LGBTQ students were taught positive representations of LGBTQ people, history, or events in their classes. A similar amount had been taught negative content about LGBTQ topics.
- Few LGBTQ students (8.2%) reported having ever received LGBTQ-inclusive sex education at school.
- Approximately a fifth of LGBTQ students (19.6%) had access to information about LGBTQ-related topics in their textbooks or other assigned readings, just under half of LGBTQ students (48.9%) had access to these topics in their school library, and just over half (55.9%) with internet access at school had access to these topics online on school computers.
- Almost all students could identify at least one school staff member whom they believed was supportive of LGBTQ students. Just over two-fifths (42.3%) could identify many (11 or more) supportive school staff.
- Just over two-fifths of LGBTQ students reported that their school administration was supportive of LGBTQ students.
- Few students reported that their school had a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policy that specifically included protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.
- Approximately one-tenth of LGBTQ students reported that their school had official policies or guidelines to support transgender or nonbinary students.

The availability of resources and supports in school for LGBTQ students is another important dimension of school climate. There are several key resources that may help to promote a safer climate and more positive school experiences for students: 1) student clubs that address issues for LGBTQ students, 2) school personnel who are supportive of LGBTQ students, 3) LGBTQ-inclusive curricular materials, and 4) inclusive, supportive school policies, such as inclusive anti-bullying policies and policies supporting transgender and nonbinary students.⁹³ Thus, we examined the availability of these resources and supports among LGBTQ students in the survey.

Supportive Student Clubs

For all students, including LGBTQ students, participation in extracurricular activities is related to a number of positive outcomes, such as academic achievement and greater school engagement.⁹⁴ Supportive student clubs for LGBTQ students, often known as Gay-Straight Alliances or Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs), can provide LGBTQ students in particular with a safe and affirming space within a school environment that they may otherwise experience as unwelcoming or hostile.⁹⁵ GSAs may also provide leadership opportunities for students and potential avenues for creating positive school change.⁹⁶ In our survey, nearly two-thirds of LGBTQ students (61.6%) reported that their school had a GSA or similar student club. Among students with a GSA in their school, almost half (48.7%) said that they

attended club meetings at least sometimes, and just over a third (34.1%) had participated as a leader or an officer in their club (see Table 2.1). Although most LGBTQ students in schools with a GSA reported having participated in the GSA at some level, nearly two-fifths (38.2%) had not.

There is a small body of research examining why LGBTQ students may or may not participate in their school's GSA. Some research suggests that LGBTQ students may be motivated to join their GSAs because of experiences of harassment and discrimination at school, to seek support (e.g., emotional support), and to engage in advocacy.⁹⁷ However, some research specifically on LGBTQ students of color suggests that some racial/ethnic groups may be discouraged from attending because they do not perceive their schools' GSAs to be inclusive of or useful for youth of color.⁹⁸ In contrast, recent research from GLSEN has found that there are some benefits to GSA participation for LGBTQ students of color, such as feeling more comfortable in bringing up LGBTQ issues in class and greater engagement in activism.⁹⁹ More research is needed in this area. Nevertheless, GSA leaders and advisors should assess potential barriers to GSA attendance at their school and take steps to ensure that GSA meetings are accessible to a diverse range of LGBTQ students.

Inclusive Curricular Resources

LGBTQ student experiences may also be shaped by inclusion of LGBTQ-related information in the curriculum. Learning about LGBTQ historical events and positive role models may enhance LGBTQ students' engagement in their schools and provide valuable information about the LGBTQ community. Students in our survey were asked whether they had been exposed to representations of LGBTQ people, history, or events in lessons at school, and the majority of respondents (66.8%) reported that their classes did *not* include these topics (see Figure 2.1).

Access to LGBTQ-inclusive instruction. Of the third of students (33.2%) who indicated that LGBTQ topics had been discussed in one or more of their classes, 48.8% said that they were covered in a positive manner only, 41.5% said that they were covered in a negative manner only, and 9.6% said that they were covered both in a positive and negative manner.¹⁰⁰ Among the students who had been taught positive things about LGBTQ-related

Table 2.1 Availability of and Participation in GSAs

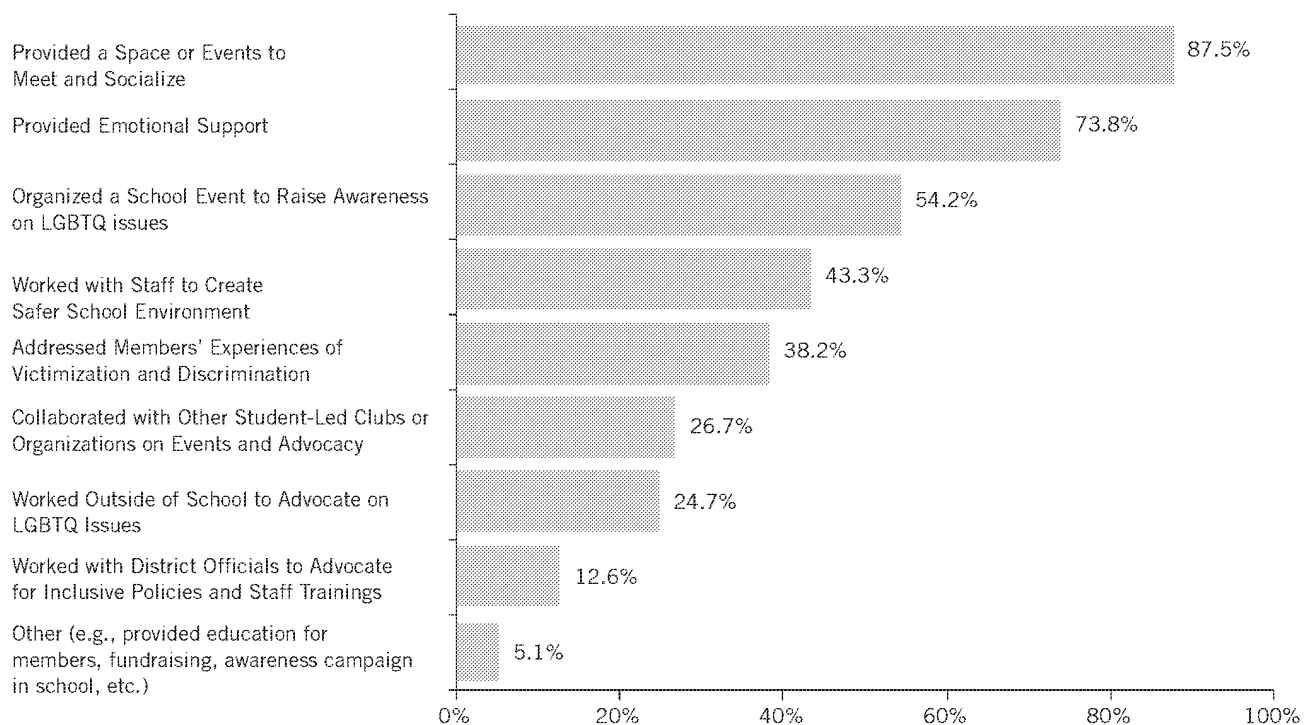
Have a GSA at School	
Yes	61.6%
No	38.4%
Frequency of GSA Meeting Attendance (n=10265)	
Frequently	29.6%
Often	7.4%
Sometimes	11.7%
Rarely	13.1%
Never	38.2%
Acted as a Leader or Officer (n=6340)	
Yes	34.1%
No	65.9%

Insight on GSA Activities

As discussed in the “Availability of School-Based Resources and Supports” section of this report, the majority of LGBTQ students (61.6%) have a GSA at their school, and among those who have a GSA, nearly two-thirds (61.8%) have attended GSA meetings. However, we do not have a strong understanding of what GSAs do and how they may vary in their actions. Therefore, in the present 2019 survey, we asked students who were members of their GSAs about the activities that their GSAs have engaged in during the past school year.

As shown in the figure, the most common activities that GSAs engaged in during the past school year were providing a space or events to meet and socialize (87.5%), providing emotional support (73.8%), and organizing a school event to raise awareness on LGBTQ issues (54.2%). The least common activities were collaborating with other student-led clubs or organizations on events and advocacy (26.7%), working outside of their school to advocate on LGBTQ issues (24.7%), and working with district officials to advocate for inclusive policies and staff trainings (12.6%). Students were also asked if there were other activities that their GSA engaged in that were not listed. Few students (5.1%) reported other activities, such as providing education for members, fundraising, and awareness campaigns in school.

Percentage of LGBTQ Students With GSAs at Their School Who Reported the Following GSA Activities During the Past School Year (n = 6168)



Given that the majority of LGBTQ students experience high levels of victimization and discrimination at school, it is not surprising that the vast majority of students reported that GSAs serve as a place to socialize and to receive emotional support. Also, for some LGBTQ students, it may be the only extracurricular activity where they can feel safe as an LGBTQ person. It is also important to note that the majority of students reported that their GSAs organize school events to raise awareness about LGBTQ issues, which may further indicate that the majority of GSAs also actively engage in making their school safer and more inclusive. Although we know that the availability of GSAs is positively associated with psychological well-being and school belonging for LGBTQ youth (see the “Utility of School-Based Resources and Supports” section of this report), we do not know whether specific GSA activities are related to these outcomes. Also, there may be certain activities that draw LGBTQ students to join their GSA because of negative school experiences related to their LGBTQ identity. Thus, further research should examine the benefits of GSA membership and whether they vary by type of activities of the GSA and whether certain activities that their GSA engages in are related to their school experiences, such as with anti-LGBTQ victimization.

topics in class, History/Social Studies and English were the classes most often mentioned as being inclusive of these topics (see Table 2.2).

Access to LGBTQ-inclusive materials and resources. We also asked students about potential curricular inclusion outside of direct classroom instruction, such as in class readings. Only a fifth of LGBTQ students (19.6%) reported that LGBTQ-related topics were included in textbooks or other assigned readings, with 0.5% of students reporting that these topics were included in many of their

“I wish there was more education and discussion of LGBTQ people and issues, but no one will start the conversation.”

textbooks and readings and 19.2% of students reporting that they were included in only a few (see Figure 2.2).¹⁰¹ Additionally, we asked students about their ability to access information about LGBTQ issues that may not be directly covered in class or assigned readings, such as information available in school libraries or via school computers. Many LGBTQ students in our survey did not have access to these types of LGBTQ-related curricular resources. As Figure 2.2 illustrates, about half (48.9%) reported that they could find books or information on LGBTQ-related topics in their school library (8.2% of students reported they could find many resources, and 40.8% reported they could find only a few).¹⁰² In addition, just over half of students with internet access at school (55.9%) reported being able to access LGBTQ-related information via school computers.

Figure 2.1 Representations of LGBTQ-Related Topics Taught in Any Classroom Curriculum

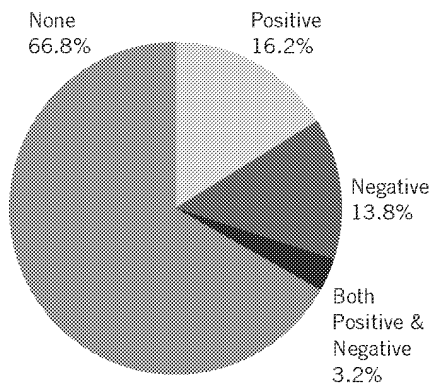


Table 2.2 Positive Representations of LGBTQ-Related Topics Taught in Class

Classes	% of LGBTQ Students Taught Positive Representations of LGBTQ-Related Topics (n = 3213)	% of All LGBTQ Students* (n = 16636)
History or Social Studies	60.3%	11.6%
English	38.0%	7.3%
Health	26.6%	5.1%
Art	14.2%	2.7%
Music	11.6%	2.2%
Science	10.6%	2.1%
Psychology	8.9%	1.7%
Foreign Language	8.8%	1.7%
Gym or Physical Education	5.3%	1.0%
Sociology	4.6%	0.9%
Math	3.6%	0.7%
Other Class (e.g., Drama, Advisory)	10.2%	2.0%

*Note: This number does not include respondents who chose not to respond to the question about the availability of LGBTQ curricular content.

Access to LGBTQ-inclusive sex education. In addition to asking broadly about LGBTQ inclusion in students' classes in the past year, we also asked students specifically about LGBTQ inclusion in any sex education they had ever received in school. Sex education can be a prime location for LGBTQ inclusion and an important source of information for youth about a variety of critical topics — including contraception and pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), dating and marriage, sexual violence, and puberty. Sex education is often included in health classes, and as previously discussed, 26.6% of LGBTQ youth reported that they were taught positive representations of LGBTQ-related topics in their health classes. However, we wanted to specifically examine LGBTQ inclusion in sex education that occurs in school, both in and out of health classes.

Figure 2.2 Availability of LGBTQ-Related Curricular Resources

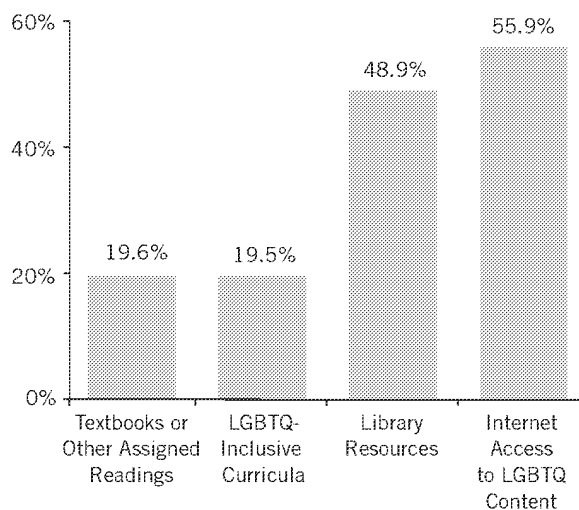
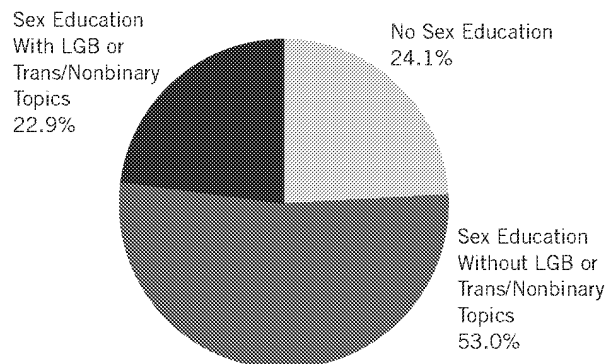


Figure 2.3 Percentage of LGBTQ Students Who Have Received Any Sex Education

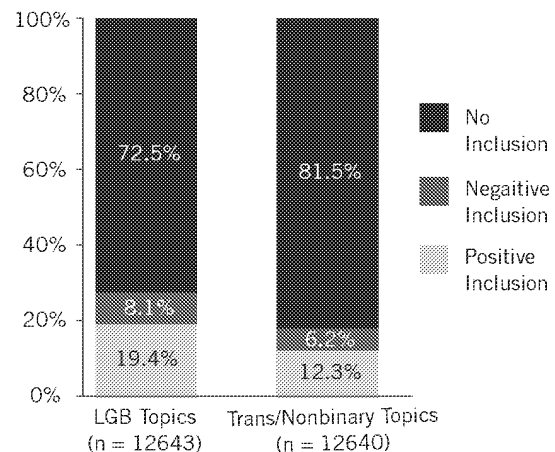


Less than a quarter of students (22.9%) who received some kind of sex education reported that it included LGBTQ topics in some way, either positively or negatively (see Figure 2.3). Furthermore, when considering all students in the sample, including those who did and did not receive sex education, only 8.2% received LGBTQ-inclusive sex education, which included positive representations of both LGB and transgender and nonbinary identities and topics. Of those who received sex education, 27.5% reported inclusion of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) topics, and 19.4% of these students reported that this inclusion was positive. In addition, 18.5% of students who received sex education were taught about transgender and nonbinary topics in their sex education courses, and of these students, 12.3% reported that these topics were taught in a positive manner. LGB topics were more common¹⁰³ in sex education classes, and were taught more positively¹⁰⁴ than transgender and nonbinary topics. However, for both LGB and transgender and nonbinary topics, more students reported positive than negative inclusion (see Figure 2.4).

Supportive School Personnel

Supportive teachers, principals, and other school staff serve as another important resource for LGBTQ students. Being able to speak with a caring adult in school may have a significant positive impact on school experiences for students, particularly those who feel marginalized or experience harassment. In our survey, almost all students (97.7%) could identify at least one

Figure 2.4 Inclusion of LGBTQ Topics in Sex Education
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students with Inclusion of Topics, Among Those Who Received Sex Education)



school staff member whom they believed was supportive of LGBTQ students at their school, and 66.3% could identify six or more supportive school staff (see Figure 2.5).

As the leaders of the school, school administrators have a particularly important role to play in the school experiences of LGBTQ youth. They may serve not only as caring adults to whom the youth can turn, but they also set the tone of the school and determine specific policies and programs that may affect the school's climate. As shown in Figure 2.6, 42.4% of LGBTQ students reported that their school administration (e.g., principal, vice principal) was very or somewhat supportive

of LGBTQ students, and less than a quarter of students (22.5%) said their administration was very or somewhat unsupportive. It is also important to note that over a third of students (35.1%) indicated that their administration was neutral. This may signify administration that has not been actively supportive or unsupportive regarding LGBTQ students. It may also signify that students are unsure of their administration's stance on LGBTQ issues, perhaps because they have not been at all vocal about LGBTQ student issues.

To understand whether certain types of educators were more likely to be seen as supportive, we asked LGBTQ students how comfortable they would feel

Figure 2.5 LGBTQ Students' Reports on the Number of Teachers and Other School Staff Who Are Supportive of LGBTQ Students

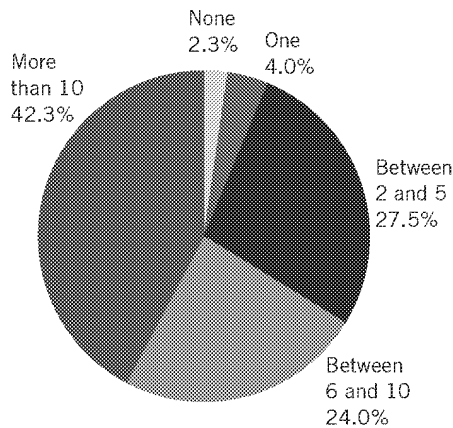


Figure 2.6 LGBTQ Students' Reports on How Supportive Their School Administration Is of LGBTQ Students

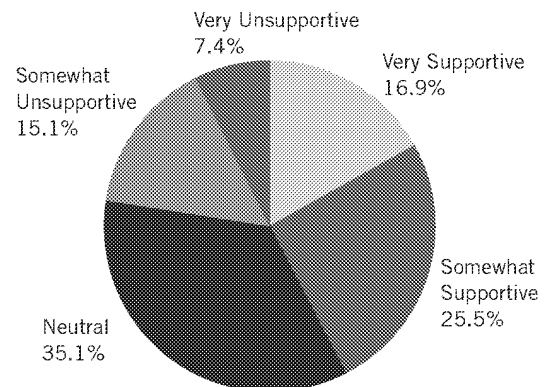
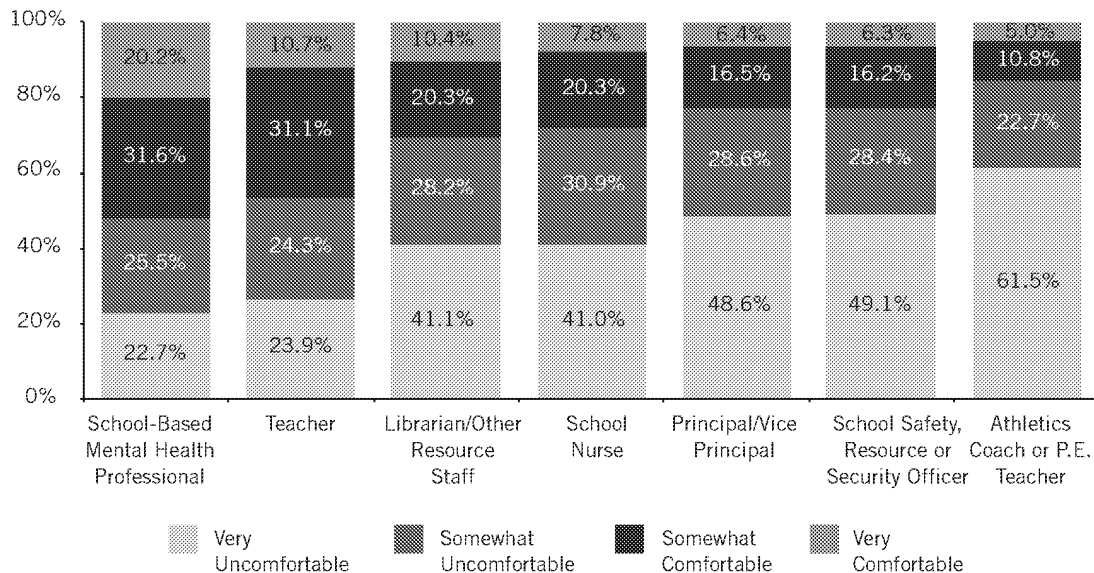


Figure 2.7 Comfort Talking with School Personnel about LGBTQ Issues



As shown in the “Availability of School-Based Resources and Supports” section of this report, nearly two-fifths (38.2%) of LGBTQ students who had a GSA at their school did not attend the meetings. Little is known about why LGBTQ students do not attend GSAs at their school. One qualitative study suggested that some LGBTQ students may not want to join a GSA because of lack of interest or awareness of a GSA at their school; lack of time or time conflict; not being out or unaware of their sexual orientation; fear of being outed, stigmatized, victimized or discriminated against; and the perception that the GSA is inactive or disorganized.¹ Furthermore, some groups of LGBTQ students, such as students of color, may feel discouraged from attending because they do not perceive their school’s GSAs to be inclusive or useful.² Therefore, we ask students who have a GSA at their school, but never attended GSA meetings, an open-ended question about their reasons for not attending.

As shown in the table, the most common reasons for not attending GSAs at their school were interpersonal dynamics, such as having conflicts with other GSA members (27.4%), scheduling and logistics issues (26.7%), and issues with outness related to attending GSA meetings (26.2%). The least common reasons for not attending were with issues with the functioning of their GSA such as lack of organization (12.8%), that their GSA did not meet their needs (12.3%), and personal concerns associated with attending their GSA such as fear or discomfort and social awkwardness (8.1%). Few students (1.3%) reported other reasons for not attending.

Given that many LGBTQ students who have a GSA at their school do not attend GSA meetings, it is important to address the issues that these students have about their GSA and barriers that prevent them from attending their GSA. Future research should examine how to address these issues, so that all LGBTQ students can benefit from attending GSA meetings at their school.

Reasons LGBTQ Students Have Not Attended Any GSA Meetings in the Past School Year (n = 3663)	
	Students Reporting %* (n)
Interpersonal Dynamics (e.g., “I just don’t get along with the people in it, not my type of folks.”)	27.4% (1005)
Scheduling and Logistics (e.g., “The meetings were on the days I had dance.”)	26.7% (977)
Outness (e.g., “I didn’t feel comfortable coming out to that many people.”)	26.2% (959)
General Concerns of Being Outed	15.3% (560)
Not Out to Parents/Family	4.9% (180)
Not Out at School	2.5% (90)
Potential Repercussions (e.g., “I am afraid of what others might do to me if they find out I have attended.”)	15.8% (580)
General Repercussion	7.7% (281)
From Parents/Family	6.1% (224)
From Peers	2.1% (78)
From Teachers or Staff	0.3% (12)
Club Functioning (e.g., “It was not well put together and no one knew when or where meetings were.”)	12.8% (469)
GSA Does Not Meet Their Needs (e.g., “I already feel comfortable as a lesbian, and my school does a good job of making everyone feel safe and included.”)	12.3% (452)
Personal Concerns (e.g., “I was too shy and nervous to participate...”)	8.1% (295)
Fear or Discomfort	5.1% (186)
Social Awkwardness	2.7% (99)
Other (e.g., other personal reasons, not aware of GSA until recently)	1.3% (47)
*Because respondents could indicate multiple reasons, categories are not mutually exclusive. Percentages may not add up to 100%.	

¹ Heck, N. C., Lindquist, L. M., Stewart, B. T., Brennan, C., Cochran, B. N. (2013). To join or not to join: Gay-Straight Student Alliances and the high school experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youths. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 25(1), 77–101.

² Ocampo, A. C. & Soodjinda, D. (2016). Invisible Asian Americans: The intersection of sexuality, race, and education among gay Asian Americans. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 19(3), 480–499.

Toomey, R. B., Huynh, V. W., Jones, S. K., Lee, S. & Revels-Macalinao, M. (2016). Sexual minority youth of color: A content analysis and critical review of the literature. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Mental Health*, 21(1), 3–31.

“...my school's policy on bullying/harassment is extremely vague and unspecific, stating that they will not stand for it but not including any specific measures that will be taken to prevent/solve any problems and also not including protections for ANY minorities, including religious, ethnic, and LGBTQ students.”

talking one-on-one with various school personnel about LGBTQ-related issues. As shown in Figure 2.7, students reported that they would feel most comfortable talking with school-based mental health professionals (e.g., school counselors, social workers, or psychologists) and teachers: 51.8% said they would be somewhat or very comfortable talking about LGBTQ issues with a mental health staff member and 41.8% would be somewhat or very comfortable talking with a teacher (see also Figure 2.7). Fewer students indicated that they would feel comfortable talking one-on-one with a school librarian (30.7%) or a school nurse (28.1%) about these issues. LGBTQ students were least likely to feel comfortable talking with an athletic coach/Physical Education (P.E.) teacher about LGBTQ issues (see also Figure 2.7).¹⁰⁵

Supportive teachers and other school staff members serve an important function in the lives of LGBTQ youth, helping them feel safer in school, as well as promoting their sense of school belonging and psychological well-being. One way that educators can demonstrate their support for LGBTQ youth is through visible displays of such support, such as Safe Space stickers and posters. These stickers and posters are part of GLSEN's

Safe Space Kit,¹⁰⁶ an educator resource aimed at making learning environments more positive for LGBTQ students. These materials are intended to help students identify staff members who are allies to LGBTQ students and who can be a source of support or needed intervention. We asked students if they had seen Safe Space stickers or posters displayed in their school, and nearly two-thirds of LGBTQ students (62.8%) in the survey reported seeing these materials at their school.

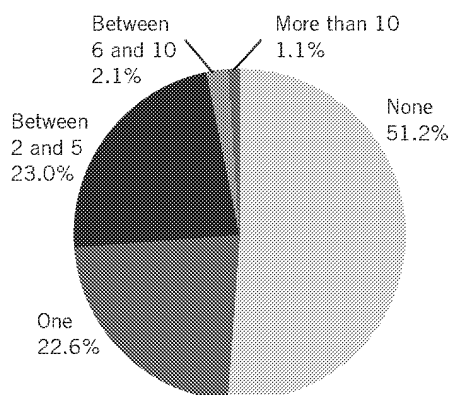
The presence of LGBTQ school personnel who are out or open at school about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity may provide another source of support for LGBTQ students. In addition, the number of out LGBTQ personnel may provide a sign of a more supportive and accepting school climate. Nearly half of students (48.8%) in our survey said they could identify at least one out LGBTQ staff person at their school (see Figure 2.8).

Inclusive and Supportive School Policies

GLSEN believes that all students should have access to a safe and supportive learning environment, regardless of a student's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Official school policies and guidelines can contribute toward this goal by setting the standards for which students should be treated, noting what types of behavior are unacceptable, and making students aware of the protections and rights afforded to them. In this section, we examine the availability of two specific forms of supportive school policies: inclusive anti-bullying and harassment policies and supportive transgender and nonbinary student policies.

School policies for addressing bullying, harassment, and assault. School policies that address in-school bullying, harassment, and assault are powerful tools for creating school environments where students feel safe. These types of policies can explicitly state protections based on personal characteristics,

Figure 2.8 LGBTQ Students' Reports on the Number of Openly LGBTQ Teachers or Other School Staff



such as sexual orientation and gender identity/ expression, among others. In this report, we identify and discuss three types of school anti-bullying and harassment policies: 1) comprehensive, 2) partially enumerated, and 3) generic. Comprehensive policies explicitly enumerate protections based on personal characteristics and include both sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. When a school has and enforces a comprehensive policy, especially one which also includes procedures for reporting incidents to school authorities, it can send a message that bullying, harassment, and assault are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Comprehensive school policies may also provide students with greater protection against victimization because they make clear the various forms of bullying, harassment, and assault that will not be tolerated. They may also demonstrate that student safety, including the safety of LGBTQ students, is taken seriously by school administrators. Partially enumerated policies explicitly mention sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, but not both, and may not provide the same level of protection for LGBTQ students. Lastly, generic anti-bullying or anti-harassment school policies do not enumerate sexual orientation or gender identity/ expression as protected categories.¹⁰⁷

Students were asked whether their school had a policy about in-school bullying, harassment, or assault, and if that policy explicitly included sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. Although a majority of students (79.1%) reported that their school had some type of policy (see Table 2.3), only 13.5% of students in our survey reported that their school had a comprehensive policy that specifically mentioned both sexual orientation and gender identity/expression (see also Table 2.3).

Policies and guidelines on transgender and nonbinary students. Anti-bullying and harassment policies are critical for ensuring safe school

environments for all students. However, these policies do not explicitly address potential discrimination faced by LGBTQ students. Our research has indicated that transgender and nonbinary youth are at heightened risk for in-school discrimination that can greatly hinder their right to an education (see also the “Experiences of Discrimination at School” section).¹⁰⁸ Some state and local education agencies have developed explicit policies and implemented practices designed to ensure transgender and nonbinary students are provided with equal access to education.¹⁰⁹ For example, to ensure that transgender and nonbinary students are called by the appropriate name and pronouns, some schools have adopted policies that require those at school to use students’ chosen names and pronouns consistent with their gender identity. However, little is known about the prevalence or the content of these types of policies.

In our survey, we asked LGBTQ students whether their school or district had official policies or guidelines to support transgender and nonbinary students, and one in ten LGBTQ students (10.9%) indicated that their school or district did have such a policy (see Figure 2.9). Transgender and nonbinary students were more likely to report that their school or district had official policies in this area than cisgender LGBTQ students and students questioning their gender identity (see also Figure 2.9),¹¹⁰ which is not surprising given that these policies are more salient for transgender and nonbinary students who would likely be more aware of their existence.

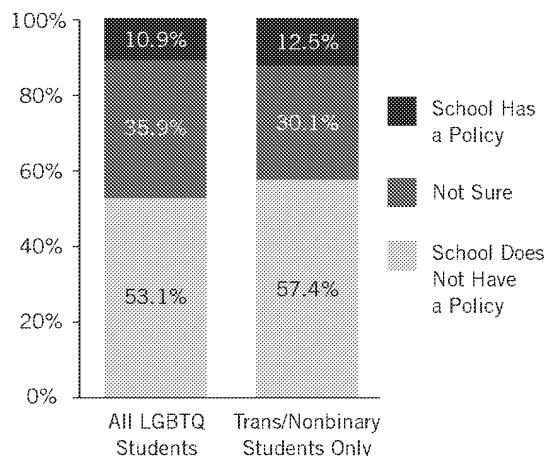
Students who reported that their school had such a policy were provided a list of nine different areas that the policy might address, and were also provided the opportunity to indicate other areas that were not listed. Responses from transgender and nonbinary students are provided in Table 2.4,

Table 2.3 LGBTQ Students’ Reports of School Bullying, Harassment, and Assault Policies

No Policy/Don’t Know	20.9%
Any Policy	79.1%
Generic (enumerates neither sexual orientation nor gender expression)	57.7%
Partially Enumerated	7.9%
<i>Sexual orientation only</i>	7.0%
<i>Gender identity/expression only</i>	0.9%
Comprehensive (enumerates both sexual orientation and gender identity/expression)	13.5%

both the percentages among only those transgender and nonbinary students who had such a policy and the percentages for all transgender and nonbinary students in the survey. Although we highlight responses from transgender and nonbinary students

Figure 2.9 Percentage of Students Reporting Their School Has Policy/Guidelines Regarding Transgender and Nonbinary Students



specifically in the table, cisgender students in our survey reported inclusion to nearly the same degree as transgender and nonbinary students.¹¹¹ Transgender and nonbinary students most commonly reported that transgender and nonbinary student policies addressed the use of students' names/pronouns (10.9% of all transgender and nonbinary students in the survey, and 89.5% of those with a policy), school bathrooms (8.6% of all transgender and nonbinary students reported use of boys/girls bathroom, and 70.3% of those with a policy; 7.9% of all transgender and nonbinary students reported gender neutral bathroom access, and 64.4% of those with a policy), and changing official school records (7.9% of all transgender and nonbinary students, and 64.9% of those with a policy).¹¹² The least commonly addressed area was housing in dorms or during field trips (3.8% of all transgender and nonbinary students, and 31.0% of those with a policy). Several students also indicated that their policy included other topics, such as access to gender-neutral locker rooms or permission to change unofficial school documents, such as a student identification card or student email address.

Table 2.4 Transgender and Nonbinary Students' Reports of Areas Addressed in Transgender and Nonbinary Student School Policies and Official Guidelines

	% of Trans/ Nonbinary Students* with Policy	% of All Trans/ Nonbinary Students in Survey
Use of chosen name/pronouns	89.5%	10.9%
Access to bathroom corresponding to one's gender	70.3%	8.6%
Change in official school records to reflect name or gender change	64.9%	7.9%
Access gender neutral bathroom	64.4%	7.9%
Able to participate in extracurricular activities that match gender identity (non-sports)	54.4%	6.7%
Able to wear clothes that reflect gender identity	48.5%	5.9%
Access to locker rooms that match gender identity	45.5%	5.6%
Participate in school sports that match gender identity	41.7%	5.1%
Stay in housing during field trips or in dorms that matches one's gender identity	31.0%	3.8%
Another topic not listed (e.g., gender-neutral locker rooms, name change on unofficial school documents)	1.5%	0.2%

*"Transgender and nonbinary students" refers to all students in the survey sample who were not cisgender and were not questioning their gender identity, including transgender students, genderqueer students, nonbinary students, and other students with an identity other than cisgender (e.g., agender).

Conclusions

Overall, the findings in this section on “Availability of School-Based Resources and Supports” revealed that many LGBTQ students did not have access to LGBTQ resources and supports at their school. Regarding GSAs, over a third reported that they did not have this type of club at their school. With regard to inclusive curricular resources, the majority of students reported that their classes did not teach positive representations of LGBTQ history, people, or events, and did not include positive representations of LGBTQ topics in sex education. Furthermore, regarding curricular resources, most students did not have access to LGBTQ-inclusive materials and resources, including LGBTQ-related textbooks or other assigned readings, LGBTQ-inclusive content in the curriculum, and LGBTQ-related library resources.

Regarding supportive school personnel, although the vast majority of students could identify at least one supportive school staff member, many students could only identify five or fewer supportive staff.

Furthermore, less than half of LGBTQ students reported that their school administration was somewhat or very supportive, and over a third of the students reported that their administration was neutral in terms of supportiveness. In order to create an inclusive school environment for LGBTQ students, it is important for students to have a wide network of staff at school that they can turn to, and administrators that are proactive in their support for LGBTQ students.

Finally, few LGBTQ students reported having comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies or supportive transgender and nonbinary student policies in their school or district. These findings indicate that more efforts are needed to provide positive supports in schools in order to create safer and more affirming school environments for LGBTQ students.

Utility of School-Based Resources and Supports

Key Findings

- LGBTQ students experienced a safer, more positive school environment when:
 - Their school had a Gay-Straight Alliance or Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) or similar student club;
 - They were taught positive representations of LGBTQ people, history, and events through their school curriculum;
 - They had supportive school staff who frequently intervened in biased remarks and effectively responded to reports of harassment and assault; and
 - Their school had an anti-bullying/ harassment policy that specifically included protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.
- Transgender and nonbinary students in schools with official policies or guidelines to support transgender and nonbinary students had more positive school experience, including less discrimination and more positive school belonging.

School-based resources, such as supportive student clubs, LGBTQ-inclusive curricula, supportive school personnel, and inclusive, supportive policies, may contribute directly to a more positive school environment for LGBTQ students.¹¹³ These institutional supports may also indirectly foster better school outcomes and well-being for students by decreasing the incidence of negative school climate factors, such as anti-LGBTQ remarks and victimization.¹¹⁴ In this section, we examine the relationship between school-based institutional supports and school climate, as well as educational indicators (specifically, absenteeism, academic achievement, educational aspirations, and school belonging), and indicators of student well-being (specifically, self-esteem and depression).

Supportive Student Clubs

Student clubs that address issues of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, such as GSAs, can provide a safe space for LGBTQ students and their allies to meet, socialize, and advocate for changes in their schools and communities.¹¹⁵ The presence of a GSA may also contribute to a more respectful student body by raising awareness of LGBTQ issues, as well as demonstrate to LGBTQ students that they have allies in their schools.¹¹⁶ As such, GSAs can contribute to safer and more inclusive schools for LGBTQ students.¹¹⁷ We specifically examined how, for LGBTQ students, the availability of a GSA at school impacts negative indicators of school climate, as well as peer intervention regarding

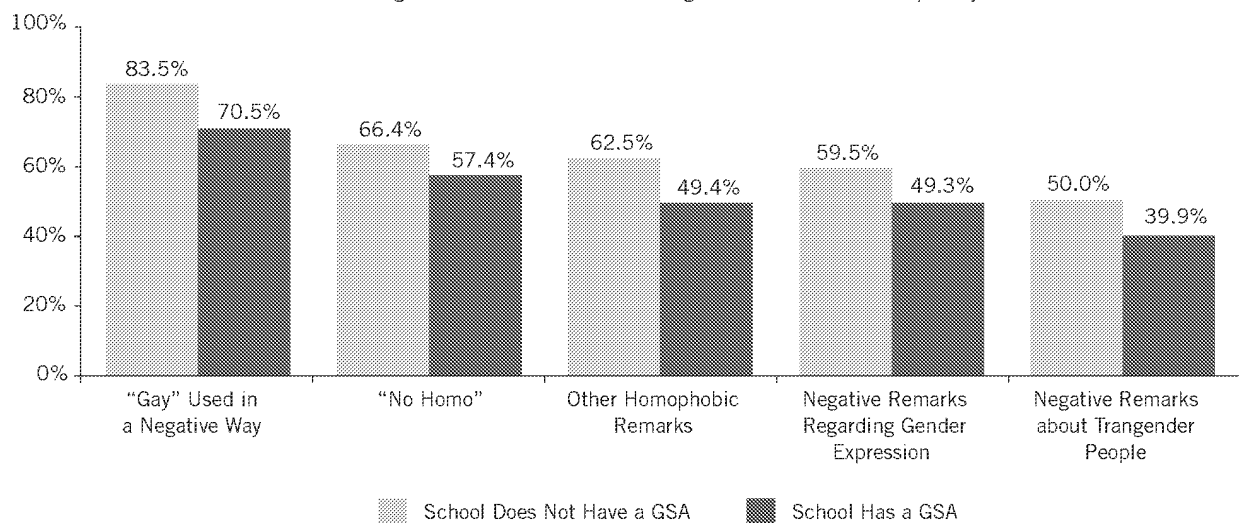
anti-LGBTQ remarks, as well as peer acceptance of LGBTQ people. We also examined how the availability of GSAs impacts LGBTQ students' connection to school staff, and feelings of school belonging and well-being.

Biased language, school safety, and absenteeism.

We found that LGBTQ students in our survey who attended schools with a GSA were less likely to report negative indicators of school climate. LGBTQ students in schools with a GSA:

- Heard anti-LGBTQ remarks less frequently than LGBTQ students in schools without a GSA (see Figure 2.10).¹¹⁸ For example, 49.4% of students in schools with a GSA reported hearing homophobic remarks such as “fag” or “dyke” often or frequently, compared to 62.5% of students in schools without a GSA;
- Were less likely to feel unsafe regarding their sexual orientation (53.6% vs. 67.4% of students without a GSA) or gender expression (40.2% vs. 46.0%; see Figure 2.11);¹¹⁹ and
- Experienced less severe victimization related to their sexual orientation or gender expression (see Figure 2.12).¹²⁰ For example, a quarter of students (24.9%) in schools with a GSA experienced higher levels of victimization based on sexual orientation, compared to two-fifths of students (40.1%) in schools without GSAs.

Figure 2.10 Presence of GSAs and Frequency of Hearing Biased Remarks
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Hearing Remarks Often or Frequently)



Perhaps, in part, because of the positive effect of GSAs on school climate, LGBTQ students in schools with a GSA were less likely to have missed school in the past month because of feeling unsafe or uncomfortable (28.4% vs. 39.6% without a GSA; see also Figure 2.11).¹²¹

Students' connections to school staff. Given that GSAs typically have at least one faculty advisor, the

presence of a GSA may make it easier for LGBTQ students to identify a supportive school staff person. Indeed, students in schools with a GSA could identify more supportive staff members than students in schools without a GSA.¹²² For example, as shown in Figure 2.13, over half of LGBTQ students (55.8%) with a GSA reported having 11 or more supportive staff, compared to just one-fifth (20.6%) of those without a GSA in their school.

Figure 2.11 Presence of GSAs and LGBTQ Students' Feelings of Safety and Missing School

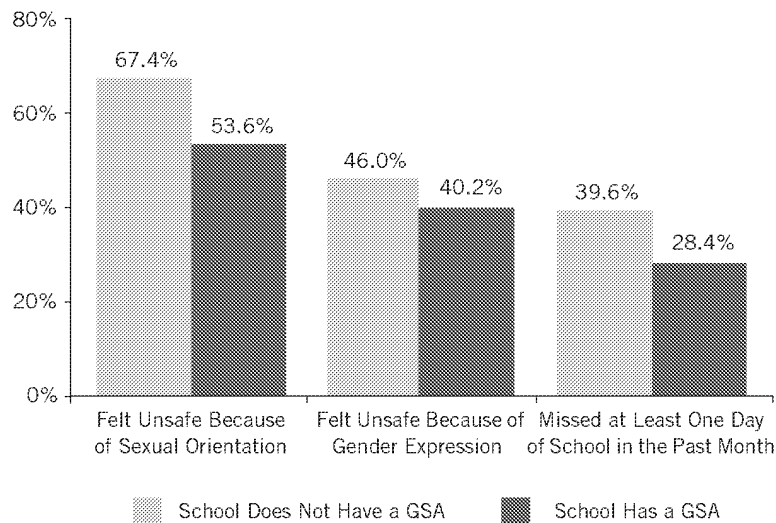


Figure 2.12 Presence of GSAs and Victimization
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Experiencing Higher Levels of Victimization)

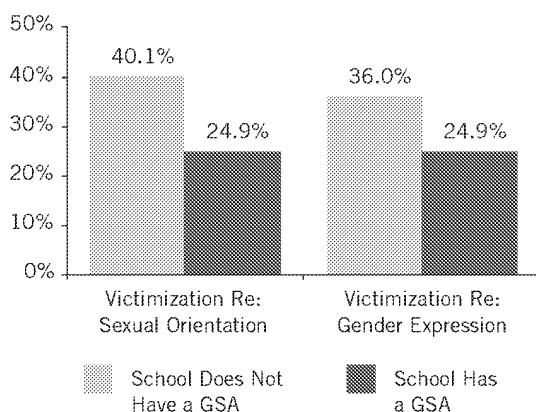
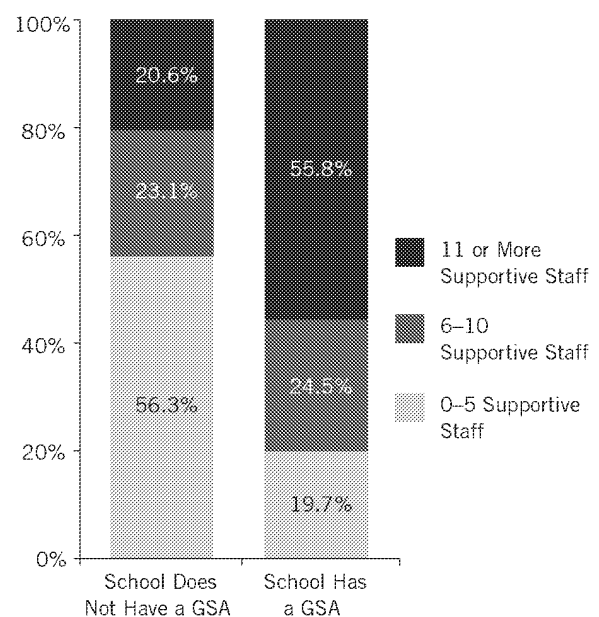


Figure 2.13 Presence of GSAs and Number of School Staff Supportive of LGBTQ Students



“I really wish that so many other LGBTQ+ kids could come to our school and feel the support we do, or at least have the ability to come to a GSA like ours which inputs so much change in our school community, and provides so much support for its members.”

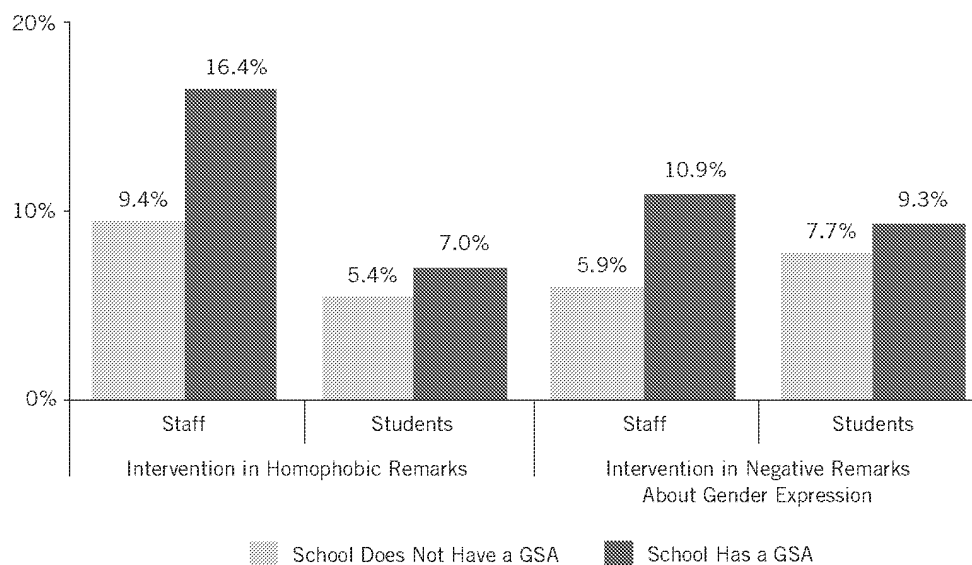
GSAs increase visibility around anti-LGBTQ bullying and discrimination in school. In addition, some GSAs also conduct trainings or workshops for faculty on LGBTQ student experiences. By increasing awareness of anti-LGBTQ bias in the school environment or promoting training for educators on LGBTQ issues, GSAs may help increase rates of staff intervention when anti-LGBTQ biased remarks occur. We found that staff in schools with GSAs intervened in homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression more frequently than educators in schools without a GSA.¹²³ For example, 16.4% of staff in schools with GSAs intervened in homophobic remarks most of the time or always, compared to 9.4% of staff in schools without GSAs (see Figure 2.14).

Peer acceptance and intervention. GSAs provide an opportunity for LGBTQ students and their allies to meet together in the school environment, and they may also provide an opportunity for LGBTQ students and issues to be visible to other students

in school. In addition, GSAs may engage in activities designed to combat anti-LGBTQ prejudice and raise awareness about LGBTQ issues. Overall, 31.9% of LGBTQ students participated in a GLSEN Day of Action, such as the Day of Silence,¹²⁴ and those who had a GSA in their school were much more likely to participate than those who did not have a GSA (41.5% of those with a GSA vs. 16.6% of those without).¹²⁵ As such, GSAs may foster greater acceptance of LGBTQ people among the student body, which in turn may result in a more positive school climate for LGBTQ students.

Among all students in our survey, 43.5% reported that their peers were somewhat or very accepting of LGBTQ people.¹²⁶ Students who attended schools with a GSA were much more likely than those without a GSA to report that their classmates were accepting of LGBTQ people: 52.0% of LGBTQ students in schools with GSAs described their peers as accepting, compared to 29.9% of those in schools without a GSA.¹²⁷ GSAs were also related to increased student intervention regarding biased

Figure 2.14 Presence of GSAs and Intervention in Anti-LGBTQ Remarks
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting that Staff and Students Intervene Most of the Time or Always)



remarks — students in schools with GSAs reported that other students intervened more often when hearing homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression than those in schools without GSAs (see Figure 2.14).¹²⁸

School belonging and student well-being. Given that LGBTQ students with a GSA report having supportive educators and more accepting peers, it is likely that these students may also have greater feelings of connectedness to their school community and more positive feelings about themselves and their LGBTQ identity. Indeed, we found that LGBTQ students in schools with GSAs reported greater feelings of school belonging,¹²⁹ lower levels of depression, and higher levels of self-esteem¹³⁰ than students in schools without GSAs.

As shown above, having a GSA at school benefits LGBTQ students in several ways. Students in schools with GSAs reported fewer homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression, experienced less anti-LGBTQ victimization, were less likely to feel unsafe and miss school for safety reasons, and reported a greater sense of belonging to their school community and increased psychological well-being. However, many LGBTQ students do not have access to GSAs at their school, and given the benefits of GSAs, more work is needed to make GSAs available to all students in order to help create safer and more inclusive schools.

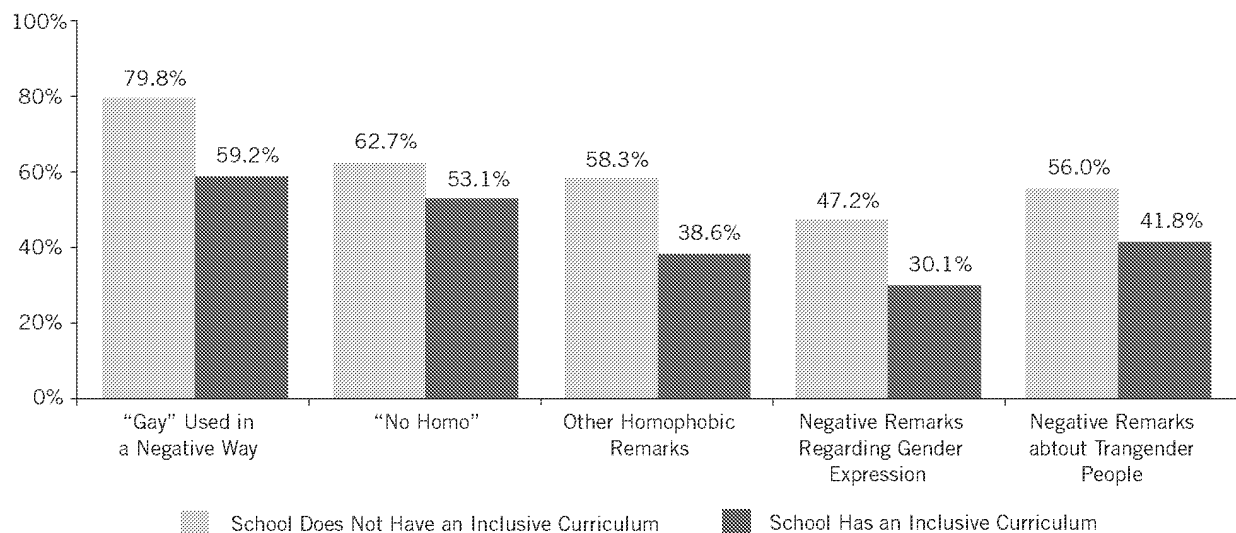
Inclusive Curricular Resources

Many experts in multicultural education believe that a curriculum that is inclusive of diverse groups -including diverse cultures, races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations - instills a belief in the intrinsic worth of all individuals and in the value of a diverse society.¹³¹ Including LGBTQ-related issues in the curriculum in a positive manner may make LGBTQ students feel like more valued members of the school community, and it may also promote more positive feelings about LGBTQ issues and persons among their peers, thereby resulting in a more positive school climate.¹³² Thus, we examined the relationship between access to LGBTQ-inclusive curricular resources and various indicators of school climate and well-being.

Biased language. Among the LGBTQ students in our survey, attending a school that included positive representations of LGBTQ topics in the curriculum was related to less frequent use of anti-LGBTQ language.¹³³ Specifically, LGBTQ students in schools with an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum:

- Heard homophobic remarks less frequently than students in schools without an inclusive curriculum (see Figure 2.15);
- Heard negative remarks about gender expression less frequently than students in schools without an inclusive curriculum (see also Figure 2.15); and

Figure 2.15 LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum and Frequency of Hearing Anti-LGBTQ Remarks

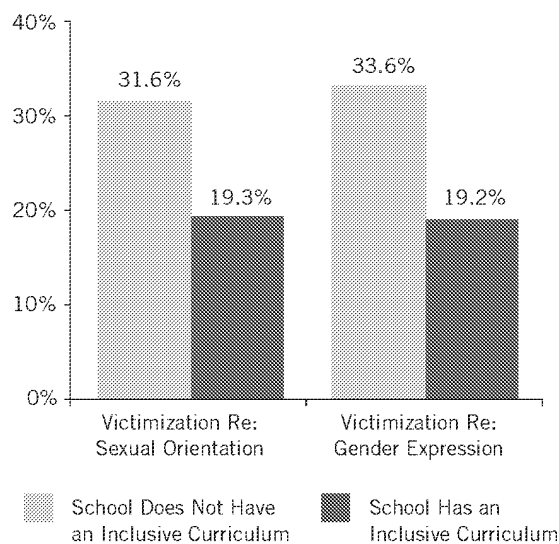


- Heard negative remarks about transgender people less frequently than students in schools without an inclusive curriculum (see also Figure 2.15).

Victimization and school safety. Attending a school with an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum was also related to greater school safety and fewer absences related to feeling unsafe at school. Specifically, LGBTQ students in schools with an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum:

- Reported less severe victimization based on sexual orientation and on gender expression than students in schools without an inclusive curriculum (see Figure 2.16);¹³⁴
- Were less likely to feel unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation and their gender expression than those without an inclusive curriculum (see Figure 2.17);¹³⁵ and
- Were less likely to report having missed school due to feeling unsafe or uncomfortable (see also Figure 2.17).¹³⁶

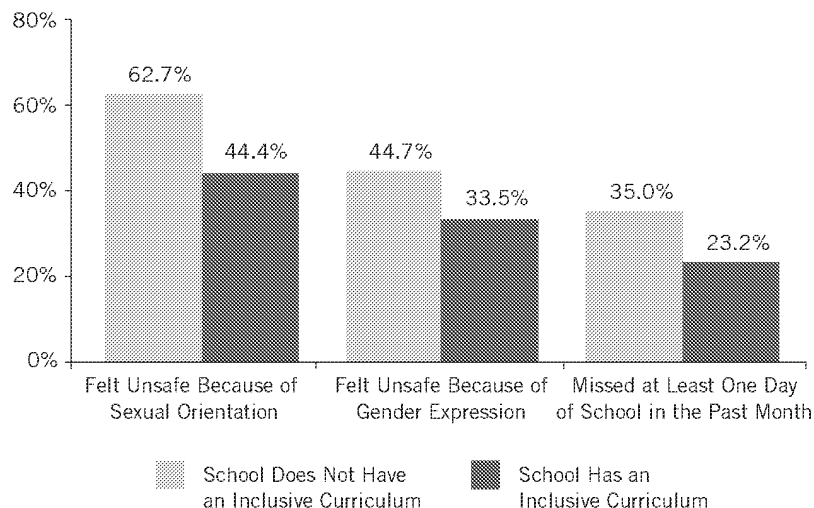
Figure 2.16 LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum and Frequency of Hearing Anti-LGBTQ Remarks



Students' connections to school staff. When educators include LGBTQ-related content in their curriculum, they may also be sending a message that they are open to discussing LGBTQ-related issues with their students. LGBTQ students in schools with an inclusive curriculum were more likely to say they felt comfortable discussing these issues with their teachers than students in schools without an inclusive curriculum — almost two-thirds of students (64.6%) with an inclusive curriculum indicated they felt “somewhat” or “very” comfortable talking with their teachers about these issues, compared to just over one-third of students (36.4%) without an inclusive curriculum.¹³⁷

Achievement and aspirations. Inclusive curricula can serve a vital role in creating an affirming learning environment where LGBTQ students see themselves reflected in their classroom. This may result in increased student engagement and may encourage

Figure 2.17 LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum and LGBTQ Students' Feelings of Safety and Missing School



students to strive academically which, in turn, may yield better educational outcomes. Indeed, we found that LGBTQ students in schools with an inclusive curriculum reported a somewhat higher grade point average (GPA) than those in schools without an inclusive curriculum (3.32 vs. 3.23).¹³⁸ We also found that students with an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum evidenced higher academic aspirations — students in schools with an inclusive curriculum were less likely to say they did not plan to pursue some type of post-secondary education compared to LGBTQ students in schools without an inclusive curriculum (6.1% vs. 8.3%).¹³⁹

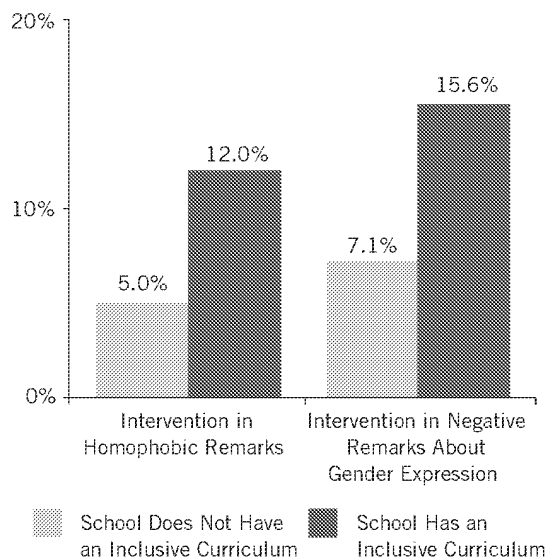
Peer acceptance and peer intervention. The inclusion of positive portrayals of LGBTQ topics in the classroom may not only have a direct effect on LGBTQ students' experiences, but may also help educate the general student body about LGBTQ issues and promote respect and understanding of LGBTQ people in general. LGBTQ students who attended schools with an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum were much more likely to report that their classmates were somewhat or very accepting of LGBTQ people (66.9% vs. 37.9%).¹⁴⁰ Increased understanding and respect may lead students in general to speak up when they witness anti-LGBTQ behaviors. Although overall rates of students' intervention regarding these types of remarks were low, we found that LGBTQ students in schools with an inclusive curriculum reported that other students were more than twice as likely to intervene most or

all of the time when hearing homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression, compared to students in schools without an inclusive curriculum (see Figure 2.18).¹⁴¹

School belonging and well-being. Given that having positive curricular inclusion was related to a greater number of supportive educators and more accepting peers, it is likely that being taught a curriculum that is inclusive of LGBTQ people and topics would also be related to LGBTQ students feeling more connected to their school community, and more positively about themselves and their LGBTQ identity. Indeed, we found that access to an inclusive curriculum was related to greater feelings of school belonging,¹⁴² higher self-esteem, and lower depression¹⁴³ among the LGBTQ students in our survey.

Overall, we found that access to inclusive curriculum is related to a more positive school climate. Students who are taught an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum report less anti-LGBTQ biased language and victimization, and are less likely to feel unsafe and miss school because of their LGBTQ identity than those who do not have access to LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. LGBTQ students with an inclusive curriculum are more comfortable talking to school staff about LGBTQ topics and report that their peers are more accepting. Finally, students at schools with an inclusive curriculum report higher levels of school belonging and self-esteem and lower levels of depression. However, as we saw in the "Availability of School-Based Resources and Supports" section, most LGBTQ students are not taught positive LGBTQ-related information and many lack access to other LGBTQ-inclusive curricular resources at school. It is important for educators to implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in their classes, as increased access to LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum and curricular resources can lead to more positive school experiences for LGBTQ students.

Figure 2.18 LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum and Student Intervention in Anti-LGBTQ Remarks



Supportive School Personnel

Having supportive teachers and school staff can have a positive effect on the educational experiences of any student, and has been shown to increase student motivation to learn and positive engagement in school.¹⁴⁴ Given that LGBTQ students often feel unsafe and unwelcome in school, having access to school

personnel who provide support may be particularly critical for these students.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, we examined the relationships between the presence of supportive staff and several indicators of school climate.

School safety and absenteeism. Having staff supportive of LGBTQ students was related to feeling safer in school and missing fewer days of school. As shown in Figure 2.19, students with more supportive staff at their schools were less likely to feel unsafe regarding their sexual orientation or gender expression, as well as less likely to miss school because of feeling unsafe or uncomfortable.¹⁴⁶ For example, 44.8% of students with a high number (11 or more) of supportive staff reported feeling unsafe regarding their sexual orientation, compared to 74.2% of students with low number (0 to 5) of supportive staff.

Achievement and aspirations. Supportive staff members serve a vital role in creating an affirming learning environment that engages students and encourages them to strive academically. Therefore, it stands to reason that supportive staff would be related to LGBTQ students' educational outcomes. We found that students with more supportive staff had greater educational aspirations.¹⁴⁷ For example, as seen in Figure 2.20, approximately one-tenth of students (10.6%) with a low number

(0 to 5) of supportive staff said they did not plan to pursue post-secondary education, compared to only 4.7% of students with a high number (11 or more) of supportive staff. We also found that students with more supportive staff reported higher GPAs: students with 0 to 5 supportive staff reported an average GPA of 3.14, compared to a GPA of 3.34 for students with 11 or more supportive staff (see Table 2.5).¹⁴⁸

School belonging and well-being. As we saw with having a GSA and an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, having supportive school personnel may also enhance a student's connection to school. Students with more supportive staff members expressed higher levels of school belonging.¹⁴⁹ Increased feelings of connection may also have a positive effect on student well-being. We found that LGBTQ students in schools with more supportive staff reported higher levels of self-esteem and lower levels of depression.¹⁵⁰

Staff responses to anti-LGBTQ remarks and victimization. School staff members serve a vital role in ensuring a safe learning environment for all students, and, as such, should respond to biased language and all types of victimization. We found that students felt safer at school when they had educators who intervened more often when anti-LGBTQ remarks were made.¹⁵¹ As shown in Figure 2.21, students in schools where staff intervened most of the time or always in

Figure 2.19 Supportive School Staff and Feelings of Safety and Missing School

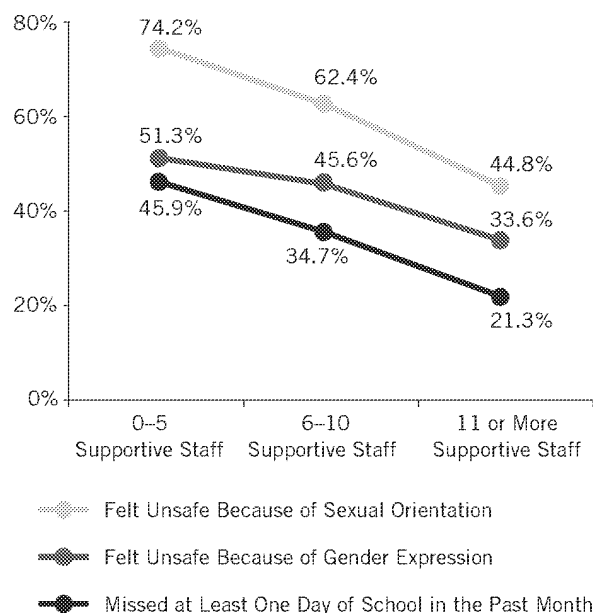
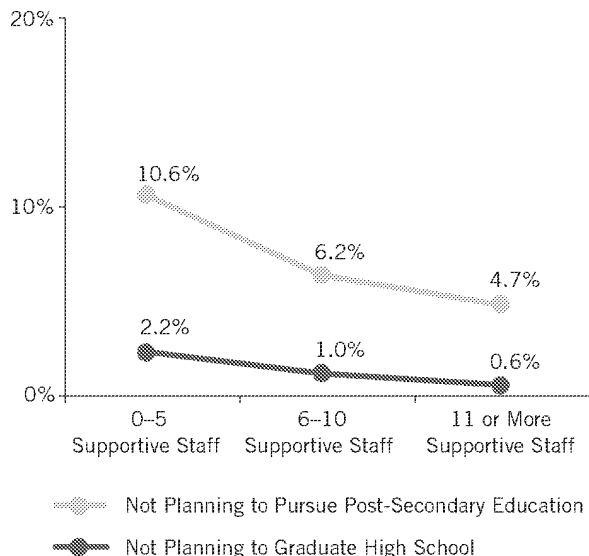


Figure 2.20 Supportive School Staff and Educational Aspirations



response to anti-LGBTQ remarks were less likely to report that they felt unsafe regarding their sexual orientation or gender expression (55.6% vs. 76.2%). Staff intervention was also related to fewer days of missing school.¹⁵² Nearly two-fifths of students (38.1%) in schools where school staff never intervened or intervened only sometimes in anti-LGBTQ remarks had missed school due to feeling unsafe or uncomfortable, compared to a fourth of students (25.0%) in schools where staff members intervened most or all of the time (see also Figure 2.21).

When school staff respond to incidents of victimization, the overarching goals should be to protect students, prevent future victimization, and demonstrate to the student body that such actions will not be tolerated. Clear and appropriate actions on the part of school staff regarding harassment and assault can improve the school environment for LGBTQ youth and may also serve to deter future acts of victimization.¹⁵³ In fact, as shown in Figure 2.22, when students believed that staff effectively addressed harassment and assault, they were less likely to feel unsafe at school regarding their sexual orientation or gender expression (67.9% vs. 84.2%)¹⁵⁴ and less likely to miss school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable

“My teachers are usually very kind, and four have openly defended me/LGBT rights. Two have given me serious emotional help and have made my life feel less terrible.”

Table 2.5 Supportive Staff and LGBTQ Students' Academic Achievement

	Mean Reported Grade Point Average (GPA)
0 to 5 Supportive Staff	3.14
6 to 10 Supportive Staff	3.22
11 or More Supportive Staff	3.34

Figure 2.21 Feelings of Safety and Staff Intervention Regarding Negative Remarks about Sexual Orientation or Gender Expression

(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Who Felt Unsafe or Missed School)

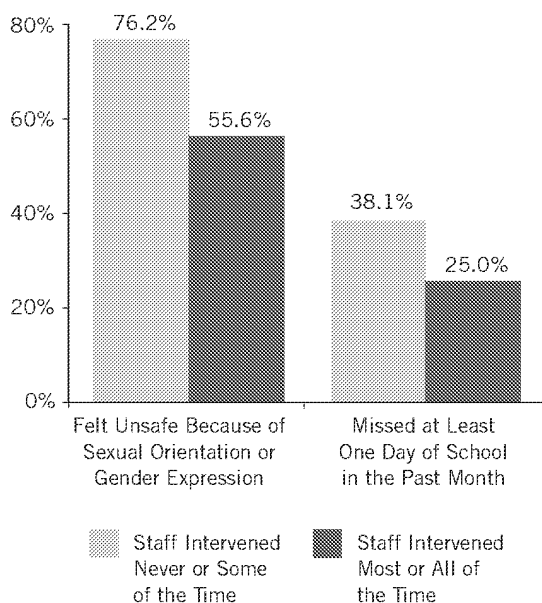
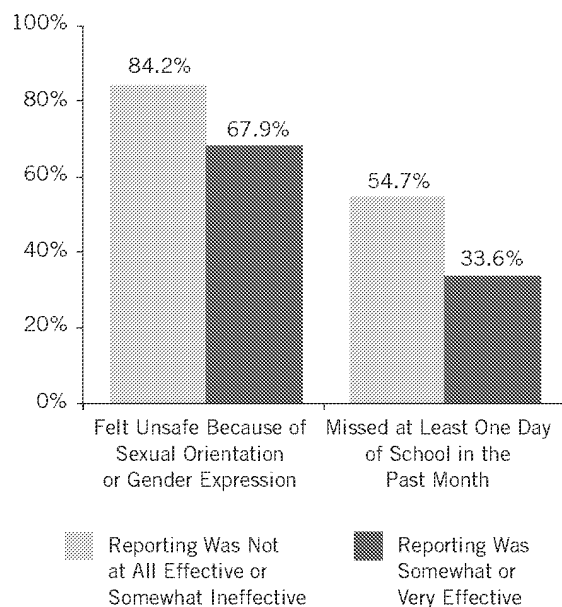


Figure 2.22 Effectiveness of Staff Response to Harassment/Assault and LGBTQ Students' Feelings of Safety and Missing School

(Percentage Among Those Who Reported Victimization to Staff, n = 4824)



(33.6% vs. 54.7%).¹⁵⁵ In addition, as shown in Figure 2.23, students in schools where staff responded effectively experienced lower levels of victimization based on their sexual orientation or gender expression. For example, 30.4% of students who reported that staff intervened effectively experienced higher levels of victimization based on gender expression, compared to over half of students (52.2%) who reported that staff responded ineffectively.¹⁵⁶

Visible displays of support. One of the many ways that educators can demonstrate to LGBTQ students that they are supportive allies is through visible displays of support, such as GLSEN's Safe Space stickers and posters. LGBTQ students who reported seeing Safe Space stickers and posters were more likely to report having supportive teachers and other staff at their schools.¹⁵⁷ For instance, as shown in Figure 2.24, just over half of students (56.1%) who had seen a Safe Space sticker or poster were able to identify a high number of supportive staff (11 or more) in their schools, compared to less than a fifth of students (18.8%) who had not seen a Safe Space sticker or poster at school.

LGBTQ-supportive school staff play a critical role in creating a more positive school climate for LGBTQ students. When LGBTQ students attend school with more caring adults to whom they can turn, they feel safer and more connected to the school community, and are more likely to plan on graduating and going on to post-secondary education. Further, when school staff demonstrate their support for LGBTQ students by intervening on anti-LGBTQ language or effectively responding to harassment, they help to reduce hostile school experiences for LGBTQ youth, thereby improving the learning environment for LGBTQ students. Our findings also highlight the importance of having several LGBTQ-supportive staff at school, rather than only a few. Having a large network of supportive staff may create more spaces throughout the school where LGBTQ students can feel at ease about their identities, and where anti-LGBTQ remarks and harassment are interrupted. Thus, schools must invest in professional development for all staff on recognizing and responding to the needs of LGBTQ students, and effectively intervening in bias-based harassment.

Figure 2.23 Effectiveness of Staff Response to Harassment/Assault and LGBTQ Students' Experiences of Victimization

(Percentage Experiencing Higher Severities of Victimization, Among Those Who Reported Victimization to Staff, n = 4654)

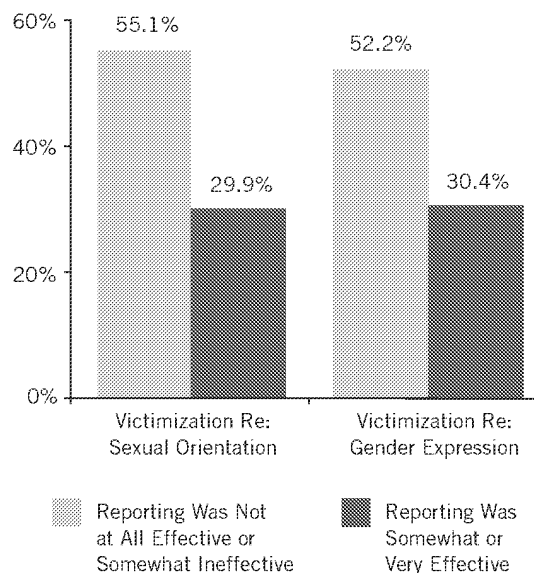
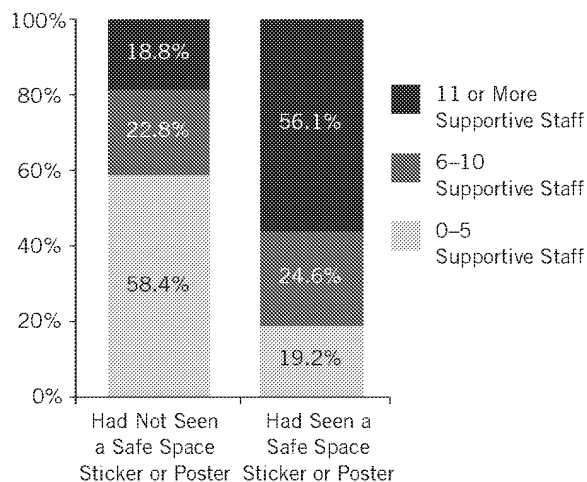


Figure 2.24 Safe Space Stickers/Posters and Number of Supportive School Staff



Inclusive and Supportive School Policies

Inclusive and supportive school policies can help to ensure that students are safe, respected, and feel valued in their school. Not only do policies specify prohibited and allowable behaviors, but they also serve to set a tone for the entire school community. When these policies are supportive of LGBTQ students, they can contribute to more positive school climate for these students.

Policies for addressing bullying, harassment, and assault. Comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies can help ensure schools are safe for LGBTQ students in that they explicitly state protections from victimization based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. Furthermore, comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies may also provide school staff with the guidance needed to appropriately intervene when students use anti-LGBTQ language and when LGBTQ students report incidents of harassment and assault.

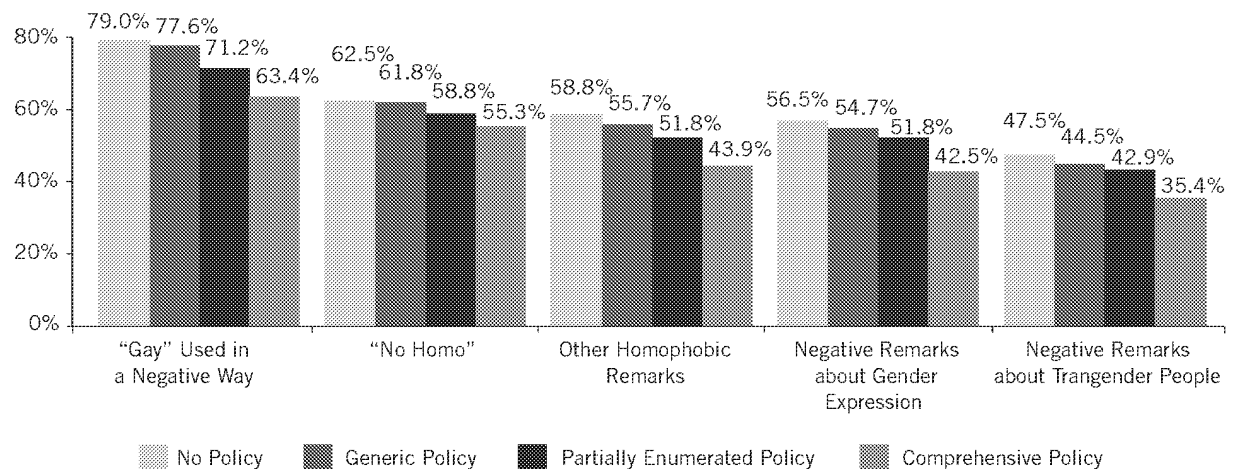
Anti-LGBTQ language. Overall, LGBTQ students in schools with comprehensive policies were the least likely to hear anti-LGBTQ language, followed by those in schools with partially enumerated policies and schools with generic policies (see Figure 2.25).¹⁵⁸ Students with no anti-bullying and harassment policy were most likely to hear such language. For example, 35.4% of students in schools with a comprehensive policy commonly heard negative remarks about transgender people, compared to 42.9% of students in schools with

partially enumerated policies, 44.5% in schools with generic policies, and 47.5% in schools with no policy.

Experiences of anti-LGBTQ victimization. Overall, LGBTQ students in schools with comprehensive policies experienced the lowest levels of anti-LGBTQ victimization, followed by partially enumerated and generic policies (see Figure 2.26).¹⁵⁹ Students with no anti-bullying and harassment policy reported the highest levels of experiences with anti-LGBTQ victimization. Furthermore, students in schools with comprehensive policies experienced lower levels of victimization based on gender expression and on sexual orientation than compared to those in schools with a generic policy (i.e., those that have no enumeration) and with no policy. For example, 23.4% of students in schools with a comprehensive policy reported higher levels of victimization based on gender expression, compared to 29.5% in schools with a generic policy, and 33.2% in schools with no policy.

Responses to anti-LGBTQ remarks. School anti-bullying/harassment policies often provide guidance to educators in addressing incidents of harassment and biased remarks. Even though students reported, in general, that staff intervention was a rare occurrence, it was more common in schools with anti-bullying policies. Students in schools with comprehensive policies reported the highest frequencies of staff intervention when anti-LGBTQ remarks occurred, followed by partially enumerated policies, and generic policies (see Figure 2.27).¹⁶⁰ Students with no anti-bullying and harassment

Figure 2.25 School Harassment/Assault Policies and Frequency of Hearing Anti-LGBTQ Remarks
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Hearing Remarks Often or Frequently)



policy reported the lowest frequencies of staff intervention. For example, a quarter of LGBTQ students (25.3%) in schools with comprehensive policies said teachers intervened most of the time or always when homophobic remarks were made, compared to under a fifth of those (17.8%) in schools with partially enumerated policies, 13.0% in schools with a generic policy, and 6.8% in schools with no policy.

Students' reporting of victimization to school staff and effectiveness of staff response. Policies may provide guidance to students on reporting bullying and harassment, but perhaps more importantly, policies may also signal that students' experiences of victimization will be addressed by

school officials. We found that the presence of a comprehensive anti-bullying policy was related to reporting of victimization — students in schools with a comprehensive school policy were most likely to report victimization to school staff than all other students in the survey (see Figure 2.28). We did not find that students in schools with partially enumerated policies differed from students with generic policies regarding reporting incidents of victimization to school staff.¹⁶¹ There were no differences in reporting victimization among the other three types of policies. LGBTQ students in schools with comprehensive policies were also more likely to report that when staff responded to victimization, their responses were effective (see also Figure 2.28).¹⁶² LGBTQ students in

Figure 2.26 School Harassment/Assault Policies and Experiences of Victimization
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Experiencing Higher Levels of Victimization)

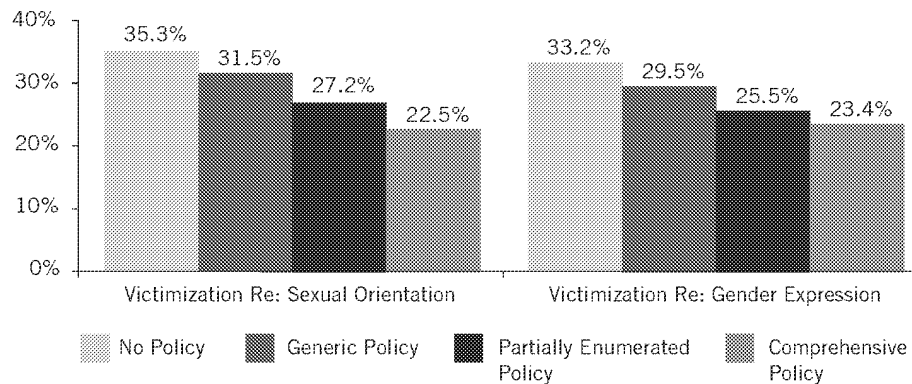
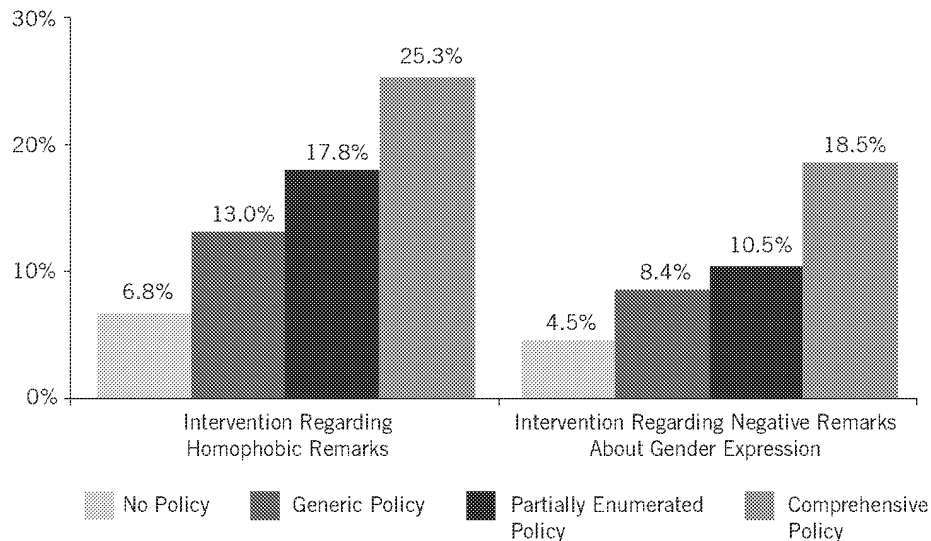


Figure 2.27 School Harassment/Assault Policies and Staff Intervention Regarding Anti-LGBTQ Remarks
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting that Staff Intervened Most of the Time or Always)



schools with comprehensive policies and partially enumerated policies were more likely to report that staff responses were effective, compared to all other students. We did not find that students in schools with comprehensive policies differed from students with partially enumerated policies regarding effectiveness of staff responses.

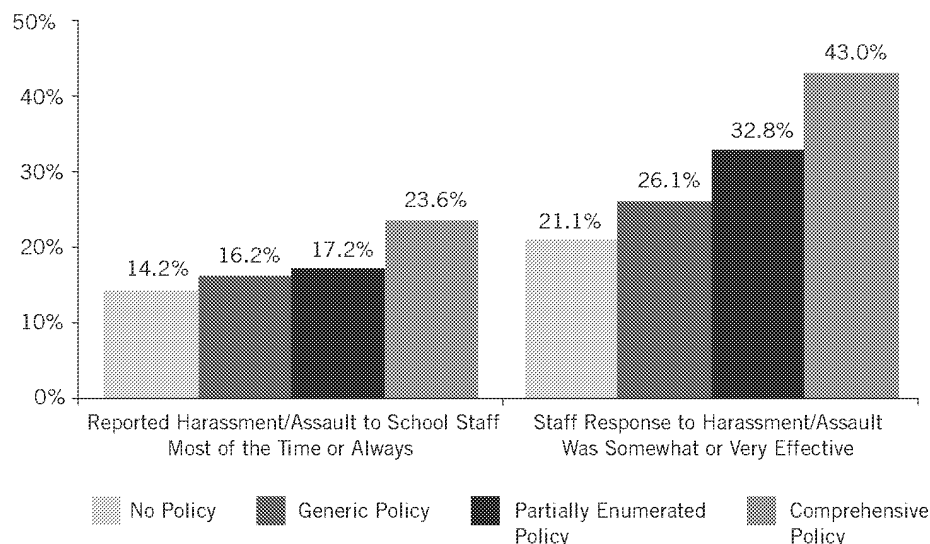
Collectively, these findings suggest that comprehensive policies are more effective than other types of policies in promoting a safe school environment for LGBTQ students. These policies may send the message to teachers and other school staff that responding to LGBTQ-based harassment is expected and critical. As we saw in our results, school personnel intervened more often and more effectively when the school was reported to have a comprehensive policy. In addition, comprehensive policies may be effective in curtailing anti-LGBTQ language and behaviors among students — students in schools with comprehensive policies reported the lowest incidence of homophobic remarks, negative remarks about gender expression, negative remarks about transgender people, and reported the lowest levels of anti-LGBTQ victimization. These policies may also send a message to students that LGBTQ-based harassment is not tolerated, and that students should take appropriate action when witnessing LGBTQ-based harassment. Thus, comprehensive policies may signal to all members of the school community that anti-LGBTQ victimization and biased remarks are not tolerated.

Policies and official guidelines on transgender and nonbinary students. School or district policies detailing the rights and protections afforded to transgender and nonbinary students help to ensure these students have access to an education. These policies can also serve to send the message that transgender and nonbinary students are a valuable and important part of the school community.

Transgender and nonbinary policies/guidelines and students' experiences of discrimination. We examined whether the presence of a policy or official guidelines supporting transgender and nonbinary students was related to experiences of gender-related discrimination at school for these students. We found that having a supportive transgender and nonbinary policy was related to a lower likelihood of gender-related discrimination — specifically, being prevented from using bathrooms of their gender identity, prevented from using locker rooms of their gender identity, prevented from wearing clothes deemed “inappropriate” based on gender, and prevented from using their chosen name or pronouns.¹⁶³ For example, as shown in Figure 2.29, transgender and nonbinary students in schools with a transgender and nonbinary student policy were less than half as likely as those in schools without a policy to experience discrimination related to their name or pronouns in school (18.8% vs. 44.9%).

As discussed in the “Experiences of Discrimination at School” section of this report, we asked about

Figure 2.28 School Harassment/Assault Policies, Reporting Harassment/Assault, and Effectiveness of Staff Response



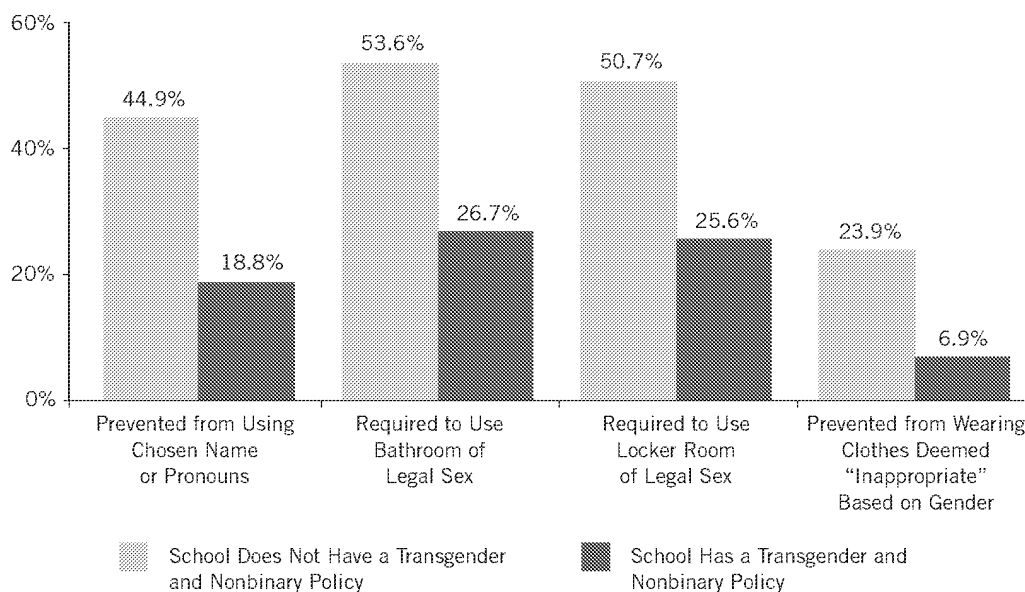
specific forms of gender-related discriminatory school policies and practices experienced by transgender and nonbinary students. We further asked transgender and nonbinary students whether there were any policies that protect against those specific forms of gender-related discrimination. For example, we asked if they were prevented from using the bathroom aligned with their gender identity, and here we asked whether there was any policy to specifically protect them from bathroom discrimination. We examined whether inclusion of protections regarding boys/girls bathrooms, gender-neutral bathrooms, locker rooms, clothing/dress codes, and name/pronouns usage were related to the discrimination experiences associated with those protections (bathroom, locker rooms, clothing/dress code, and name/pronouns usage, respectively).

Regarding locker rooms, we found that transgender and nonbinary students with policies specifying locker room access were less likely to have been prevented from using the locker room of their gender.¹⁶⁴ Similarly, regarding bathroom access, we found that transgender and nonbinary students in schools with policies explicitly allowing them access to boys' or girls' bathrooms consistent with their gender identity, as well as those with policies allowing them access to gender neutral bathrooms, were less likely to be prevented from using

bathrooms that were consistent with their gender.¹⁶⁵ With regard to experiences of discrimination related to names/pronouns for transgender and nonbinary students, we found that transgender and nonbinary students in schools with policies having the specific inclusion of name/pronoun protections were less likely to be prevented from using their chosen names/pronouns.¹⁶⁶ However, with regard to the experiences of clothing-related discrimination, inclusion of protections related to gendered dress codes was not related to clothing discrimination.¹⁶⁷ It may be that certain types of discrimination, such as enforcing restrictive gendered dress code policies, may be more dependent on individual school staff and their knowledge or interpretation of the policy, and this finding may indicate a need for staff training on the policy and its implementation.

The findings on locker room and bathroom policies highlight the importance of codifying access to these spaces for transgender and nonbinary students in official policies, given that transgender and nonbinary students in schools with such policies reported less discrimination.¹⁶⁸ In addition, our findings demonstrate how policies about names and pronouns are crucial as they were associated with less discrimination of that type. Furthermore, previous research has shown that preventing

Figure 2.29 Transgender and Nonbinary Policy and Gender-Related Discrimination
(Percentage of Transgender and Nonbinary Students Experiencing Type of Discrimination in School)



transgender and nonbinary students from using their chosen pronouns is associated with lowered psychological well-being,¹⁶⁹ which, along with our findings on names/pronouns discrimination, underscore the importance of enforcing the implementation of such policies. Regarding clothing-related discrimination, the findings may reflect the need for effective implementation of policies, including notification, enforcement, and related training.

Transgender and nonbinary official policies/guidelines and school engagement. Having policies that provide access and support to transgender and nonbinary students may help students feel comfortable and welcome in their school, ultimately resulting in greater school engagement. In fact, we found that transgender and nonbinary students in schools with these policies or guidelines were more engaged with their school community. Transgender and nonbinary students with supportive transgender and nonbinary policies were less likely to miss school due to feeling unsafe or uncomfortable — 63.5% of those with a policy had not missed school for those reasons, compared to 57.6% of students without a policy (see Figure 2.30).¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, transgender and nonbinary students with these policies also felt more connected to their school community; they reported higher levels of school belonging than those without policies.¹⁷¹

In addition to the presence of any type of transgender and nonbinary policy, policies that are more comprehensive and cover more areas of protection may be more effective in promoting school engagement for these youth. We found that among transgender and nonbinary students whose school had a transgender and nonbinary policy, the number of protections addressed in these policies was related to greater school belonging, but was not related to absenteeism.¹⁷² Thus, the more comprehensive a school's policy is, the more effective it may be in ensuring transgender and nonbinary students feel connected to their school.

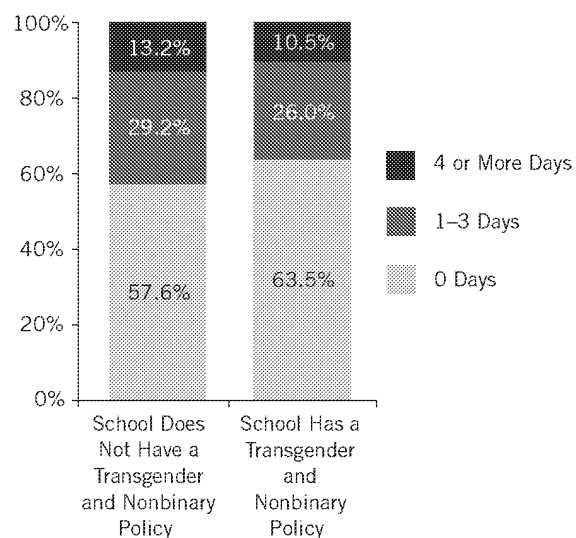
These findings indicate that having specific policies or official guidelines that explicitly document the rights of transgender and nonbinary students can greatly improve the school experience for these students. Given transgender and nonbinary students are at higher risk of in-school victimization, absenteeism, school discipline, and ultimately leaving school altogether,¹⁷³ it is critical

that schools institute policies to help safeguard these students' rights and ensure they have equal access to an education. For instance, the findings regarding locker room and bathroom discrimination indicate that allowing students to access gendered facilities that correspond to their gender are critical for transgender and nonbinary students. Although having official protections for transgender and nonbinary students and their rights is crucial, the power of the policy is in the degree to which it is implemented. Professional development is critical to ensure that school staff are aware of policy mandates including those that protect transgender and nonbinary students, and are able to enact them. Furthermore, schools and districts should develop monitoring and accountability measures to ensure that these policies are being effectively implemented and that transgender and nonbinary students are not being deprived of their rights.

Supportive and inclusive school policies play an essential role in creating safe and inclusive school communities. However, it is important to note that a significant portion of students in schools with these policies still faced hostile school climates — including victimization and

Figure 2.30 Transgender and Nonbinary Policy and Days of Missed School

(Percentage of Transgender and Nonbinary Students Who Missed School in the Past Month Due to Feeling Unsafe or Uncomfortable)



discrimination — even when they reported having an anti-bullying/harassment policy or a transgender and nonbinary student policy. Clearly, it is not enough for policies to merely exist in schools, but they must also be enforced and effectively implemented. For both types of policies explored in this section, a substantial portion of students indicated that they did not know whether their school had such policies (see Table 2.3 and Figure 2.9 in “Availability of School-Based Resources and Supports” section). If a student is not aware of their school’s policies, then they would not be aware of the valuable rights and protections these policies provide. Therefore, it is critical not only that schools enact these policies but also that all members of the school community are made aware of the policies and what they include. Furthermore, policies are vitally important, yet are only one of the key elements necessary to ensure safe and welcoming schools for LGBTQ students.

Conclusions

Our findings indicate that LGBTQ supports and resources play an important role in making schools safer and more affirming for LGBTQ students. Students in schools that had a GSA and students in schools that had LGBTQ inclusive curriculum (taught positive representations of LGBTQ people, history, and events) reported less anti-LGBTQ biased language and less anti-LGBTQ victimization, were less likely to feel unsafe and to miss school for safety reasons, and reported a greater sense of belonging to their school community and increased psychological well-being. Students in schools with LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum also had higher GPAs, higher educational aspirations, were more

comfortable talking to school staff about LGBTQ topics, and were more likely to have classmates who were accepting of LGBTQ people. Our findings also showed that students with more supportive school staff were less likely to feel unsafe and to miss school for safety reasons, had higher GPAs, higher educational aspirations, and reported a greater sense of belonging to their school community and increased psychological well-being.

Students in schools with comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies that included protections for sexual orientation and gender identity/expression reported less anti-LGBTQ biased language and less anti-LGBTQ victimization. Furthermore, students with comprehensive policies reported greater frequency of school staff intervention regarding anti-LGBTQ biased remarks, were more likely to report incidents of harassment and assault to school personnel, and more likely to rate school staff’s response to such incidents as effective. Among transgender and nonbinary students, those in schools with supportive transgender and nonbinary official policies or guidelines reported less gender-related discrimination, were less likely to miss school because of feeling unsafe, and felt a greater sense of connection to their school community.

Unfortunately, as discussed previously in the “Availability of School-Based Resources and Supports” section, many LGBTQ students do not have access to these supports and resources at their schools. These findings indicate the importance of advocating for the inclusion of these resources in schools to ensure positive learning environments for LGBTQ students in all schools.



PART THREE SCHOOL CLIMATE BY DEMOGRAPHIC AND SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

The 2019–2020 GLSEN National Student Council. The National Student Council dedicates their time, passion, and commitment to safer schools, advising GLSEN programs and campaigns, sharing their stories with community stakeholders, and elevating the voices of marginalized groups within the LGBTQ community.

School Climate and Sexual Orientation



Key Findings

- Pansexual students experienced more hostile climates than students of other sexual orientations.
- Gay and lesbian students were more likely to be “out” about their sexual orientation at school, both to other students and to school staff, than students of other sexual orientations.

“I had no idea what pansexual was until somebody explained it to me in high school and that’s how I identify. If somebody had told me what it was sooner, I would not have spent so much time questioning my sexuality and thinking I was weird and broken.”

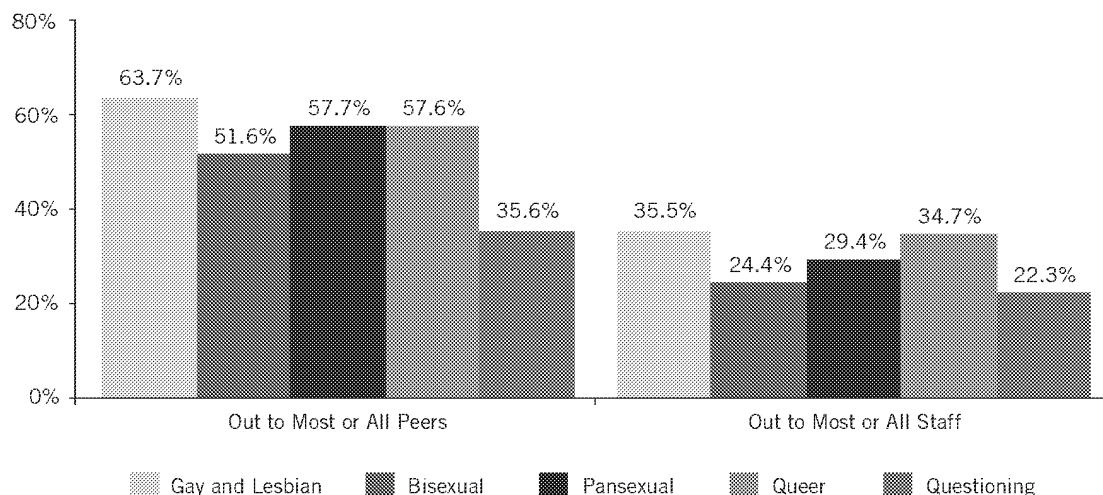
An important element of adolescent development is identity formation, in which youth explore and come to define their personal identity, both as an individual and as a member of different social groups.¹⁷⁴ Youth in our survey were navigating the development of multiple identities, including their sexual orientation identity. As it is a developmental process, age plays a role in identity formation. Older youth, who have had more time to explore and develop their identity, may be more secure and confident about their lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, or queer identity, which could contribute to different school experiences than younger youth. In fact, we found that age was related to sexual orientation identity. Queer students were older than students with all other sexual orientations,

and pansexual students were younger than gay and lesbian, bisexual, and queer students.¹⁷⁵

One of the last steps of sexual orientation identity formation is coming out publicly about one’s lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, or queer identity.¹⁷⁶ Students who have reached this stage of identity development may be more confident in their identity, but also may be more targeted for victimization and discrimination. Indeed, previous research has shown that being out about one’s LGBTQ identity at school relates to greater peer victimization.¹⁷⁷ In our survey, gay and lesbian students were more out to peers than were students with other sexual orientations, and pansexual students were more out to peers than were bisexual and questioning students. Gay and lesbian students were also more out to school staff than pansexual, bisexual, and questioning students, and pansexual students were more out to staff than bisexual and questioning students (see Figure 3.1).¹⁷⁸

LGBTQ students in our sample were not only navigating their sexual orientation identity, many were also developing their non-cisgender gender identities. It is important to reiterate that sexual orientation identity and gender identity are not wholly independent amongst LGBTQ youth, and prior research has shown that transgender and nonbinary students are more likely to have negative school experiences than cisgender students.¹⁷⁹ In our survey, pansexual and queer students were least likely to be cisgender — they were more likely to identify as transgender, genderqueer, nonbinary, or another non-cisgender identity than were gay

Figure 3.1 Outness in School by Sexual Orientation
(Percentages of LGBTQ Students Out to Peers and School Staff)



and lesbian, bisexual, and questioning students.¹⁸⁰ Nearly two thirds of pansexual (62.4%) and queer (64.3%) students did not identify as cisgender. Alternatively, gay and lesbian and bisexual students were more likely to identify as cisgender than were pansexual and questioning students,¹⁸¹ and 6 in 10 gay and lesbian (59.8%) and bisexual (60.0%) students identified as such.

We examined differences in school climate and students' school experiences across sexual orientation groups — gay and lesbian ("gay/lesbian") students, bisexual students, pansexual students, queer students, and students questioning their sexual orientation ("questioning").¹⁸² Because of the differences in age, outness to peers and adults in school, and gender identity discussed above, and the fact that they contribute to students' school experiences, in the following analyses we controlled for all these characteristics.

With regard to victimization, we specifically examined students' experiences related to sexual orientation and gender expression, as they are most related to students' LGBTQ identities. We also examined differences in students' experiences of sexual harassment, as previous research has found significant differences based

on sexual orientation.¹⁸³ Lastly, we examined differences across sexual orientations regarding the experiences of students with discriminatory school policies and practices, and school discipline and regarding their levels of school engagement, as these were also identified as particularly salient.

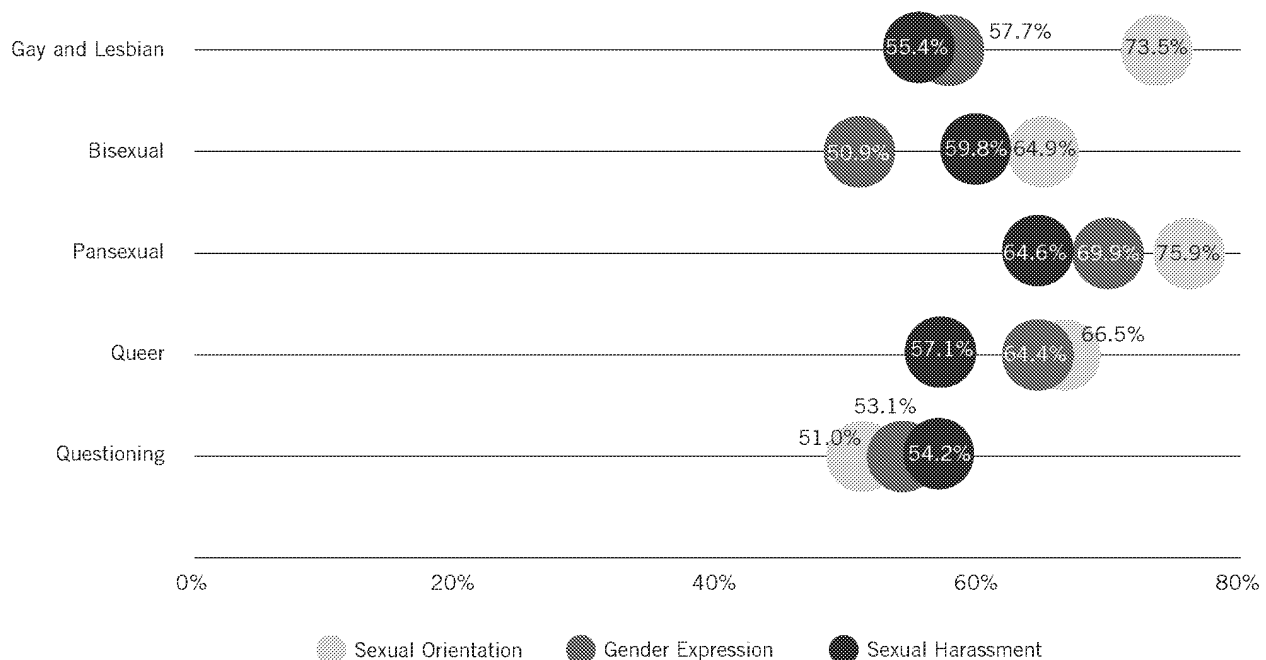
Victimization

Students' experiences of in-school victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression differed based on their sexual orientation (see Figure 3.2).¹⁸⁴

Gay/lesbian and pansexual students reported higher levels of victimization based on sexual orientation than did queer, bisexual, and questioning students. For example, approximately three-quarters of gay/lesbian (73.5%) and pansexual (75.9%) students reported having been victimized based on sexual orientation in contrast to nearly two-thirds of queer (66.5%) and bisexual (64.9%) students, and half of questioning (51.0%) students.

Pansexual students experienced higher levels of victimization based on gender expression than students of all other sexual orientations. Specifically, 69.9% of pansexual students

Figure 3.2 Victimization by Sexual Orientation



experienced this type of victimization compared to 57.7% of gay/lesbian, 50.9% of bisexual, 64.4% of queer, and 53.1% of questioning students.

Regarding sexual harassment, we found that pansexual students reported a higher incidence than students of all other sexual orientations, and that bisexual students reported a higher incidence than gay/lesbian and questioning students.¹⁸⁵ As shown in Figure 3.2, almost two-thirds of pansexual students (64.6%) reported having been sexually harassed at school in the past year, compared to more than half of gay/lesbian (55.4%), bisexual (59.8%), and queer (57.1%) students, and nearly half of questioning (54.2%) students.

Discrimination and School Discipline

Experiences of anti-LGBTQ discrimination through school policies and practices also varied based on students' sexual orientation.¹⁸⁶ Pansexual students were more likely to report experiencing this type of discrimination than gay/lesbian, bisexual, and questioning students (see Figure 3.3). For example, over two-thirds of pansexual students (69.5%) experienced discrimination, compared to approximately half of bisexual and questioning students (54.5% and 52.9%, respectively).

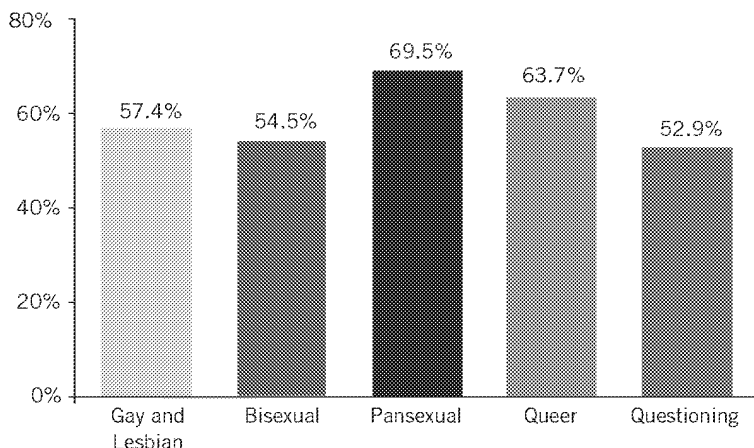
A growing field of research on school discipline has suggested that LGBTQ students may be at a higher risk of experiencing school discipline than their non-LGBTQ peers,¹⁸⁷ but most of these studies have not examined sexual orientation

differences within the LGBTQ population, perhaps because of small sample sizes of LGBTQ students. Therefore, we examined whether in-school and out-of-school rates of school discipline varied based on students' sexual orientation among the students in our survey. Specifically, we examined differences in in-school discipline (being referred to the principal, getting detention, or receiving an in-school suspension), and in out-of-school discipline (receiving out-of-school suspension or being expelled). As shown in Figure 3.4, pansexual students reported higher rates of in-school discipline than queer students. Queer students experienced lower rates of both in- and out-of-school discipline than did gay and lesbian and pansexual students.¹⁸⁸

Absenteeism

Experiencing victimization, discrimination, and disproportionate rates of discipline all serve to make schools less safe and welcoming for students, which could influence students' desire to attend school. Given that pansexual students experienced higher rates of victimization, it is not surprising that pansexual students were more likely than gay and lesbian, bisexual, and queer students to report having missed school because they felt unsafe than all other students (see Figure 3.5).¹⁸⁹ For example, 40.1% of pansexual students reported missing school in the past month due to safety concerns, compared to slightly less than a third of gay and lesbian (31.6%) and bisexual (30.2%) students.

Figure 3.3 Experiences of Discrimination by Sexual Orientation
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Who Experienced Anti-LGBTQ Discriminatory Policies and Practices)



Conclusions

Overall, our results indicate that pansexual students reported the most negative school experiences in comparison to students of other sexual orientations. Pansexual students experienced higher levels of victimization based on gender identity and sexual harassment than all other sexual orientations. Pansexual students, along with gay and lesbian students, reported the highest rates of victimization based on sexual orientation. Pansexual students also experienced more discriminatory policies and practices and missed more school due to feeling unsafe than did gay and lesbian, bisexual, and questioning students.

Further research is clearly warranted to understand why pansexual students appear to face more hostile school climates than other students. This research should examine factors related to a student's decision to adopt particular sexual identity labels (i.e., why a student who is attracted to people of multiple genders may identify as pansexual as opposed to queer or bisexual) to better understand these different sexual orientation groups.

These findings reveal a complex picture regarding differences among LGBTQ students by sexual orientation. In our survey, bisexual students experienced less victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression than gay and

Figure 3.4 School Discipline by Sexual Orientation
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Who Experienced In-School and Out-of-School Discipline)

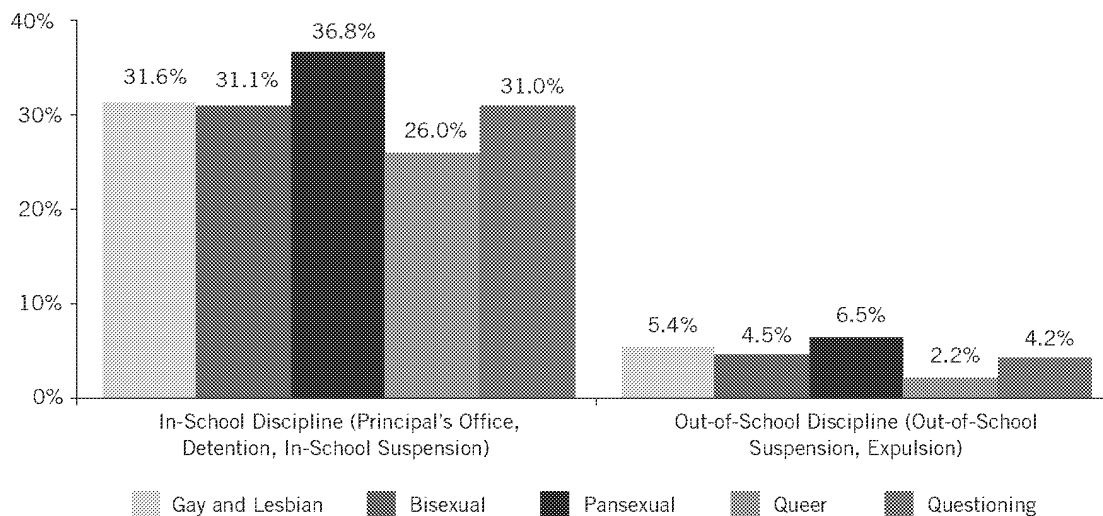
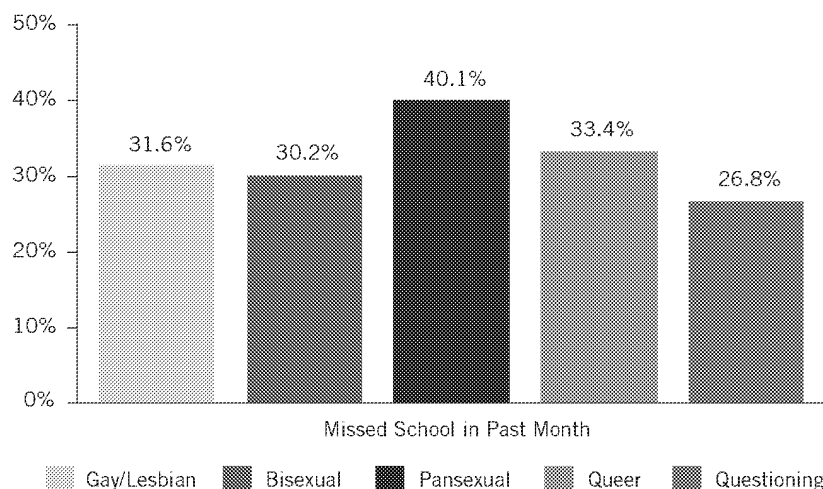


Figure 3.5 Missing School Due to Safety Concerns



lesbian students, but more sexual harassment than their gay and lesbian peers. However, bisexual youth did not differ from gay and lesbian students with regard to discrimination, discipline, and missing school due to safety concerns. Yet research on adolescent health outcomes has demonstrated that bisexual youth are typically at higher risk than both heterosexual and lesbian/gay peers on suicidality, substance abuse, and intimate partner

violence.¹⁹⁰ Furthermore, queer students were similar to gay and lesbian and bisexual students with regard to hostile school climate experiences, but they were less likely to experience school discipline. More research is needed to better understand the complex role sexual identity plays in the experiences of adolescents' lives both in and out of school.

School Climate and Gender

Key Findings

- Transgender students experienced a more hostile school climate than LGBQ cisgender students and nonbinary students.
- Nonbinary students experienced a more hostile school climate than cisgender LGBQ students.
- Among cisgender LGBQ students, male students experienced a more hostile school climate based on their gender expression and on sexual orientation than cisgender female students.
- Cisgender female students experienced a more hostile school climate based on their gender than cisgender male students.

“I’m the first openly transgender person at my school which makes me a bigger target for bullying and harassment than most others.”

We also examined potential differences in LGBTQ students’ experiences of safety, victimization, and discrimination by gender identity, specifically, the differences between transgender, nonbinary, cisgender, and questioning students as well as differences within each of those identity groups.¹⁹¹ Furthermore, we examined school engagement, specifically absenteeism for safety reasons, feelings of school belonging, changing schools for safety reasons, and dropping out. Given the growing attention to inequities in administration of school discipline and some previous research indicating that transgender and gender nonconforming students are more likely to face disciplinary consequences at school,¹⁹² we also examined gender differences in rates of school discipline — both in-school discipline and out-of-school discipline.

Across all gender groups, students commonly reported feeling unsafe, experiencing high frequencies of harassment or assault, and facing discrimination at school related to their gender, gender expression, and sexual orientation. Furthermore, a sizable number of students across gender groups reported missing school and, to a lesser extent, changing schools because of safety concerns. In addition, LGBTQ students of all gender identities reported having been disciplined at school. However, there were some significant differences among gender groups in all of these areas.

Experiences of Transgender Students

Overall, transgender students were more likely than all other students to have negative experiences at school.

Safety and victimization. Specifically, compared to cisgender and nonbinary students, transgender students:

- Were more likely to have felt unsafe based on their gender expression (see Figure 3.6);¹⁹³
- Experienced higher levels of victimization based on their gender expression (see Figure 3.7);¹⁹⁴
- Were more likely to have felt unsafe at school based on their gender (see Figure 3.6);¹⁹⁵ and
- Experienced higher levels of victimization based on their gender (see Figure 3.7).¹⁹⁶

Transgender students were also more likely to have felt unsafe¹⁹⁷ and experienced higher levels of victimization¹⁹⁸ because of their sexual orientation compared to cisgender LGBTQ students, but were less likely than nonbinary students to feel unsafe based on sexual orientation (see Figures 3.6 and 3.7).

Avoiding school spaces. As shown in the “School Safety” section in Part 1 of this report, sizable percentages of LGBTQ students avoided places at school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable, most notably spaces that are traditionally segregated by sex in schools, such as bathrooms and locker rooms. Overall, transgender students were more likely to avoid spaces at school than were other students.¹⁹⁹ For transgender and nonbinary youth (i.e., genderqueer and other nonbinary-identified youth), sex-segregated spaces at school may be particularly challenging.²⁰⁰ Because of this, we specifically examined whether transgender students were more likely to avoid gendered spaces. As shown in Figure 3.8, we found that, compared to cisgender students and nonbinary students, transgender students were:²⁰¹

- More likely to avoid school bathrooms at school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable;
- More likely to avoid school locker rooms because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable; and
- More likely to avoid Gym/Physical Education class because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.

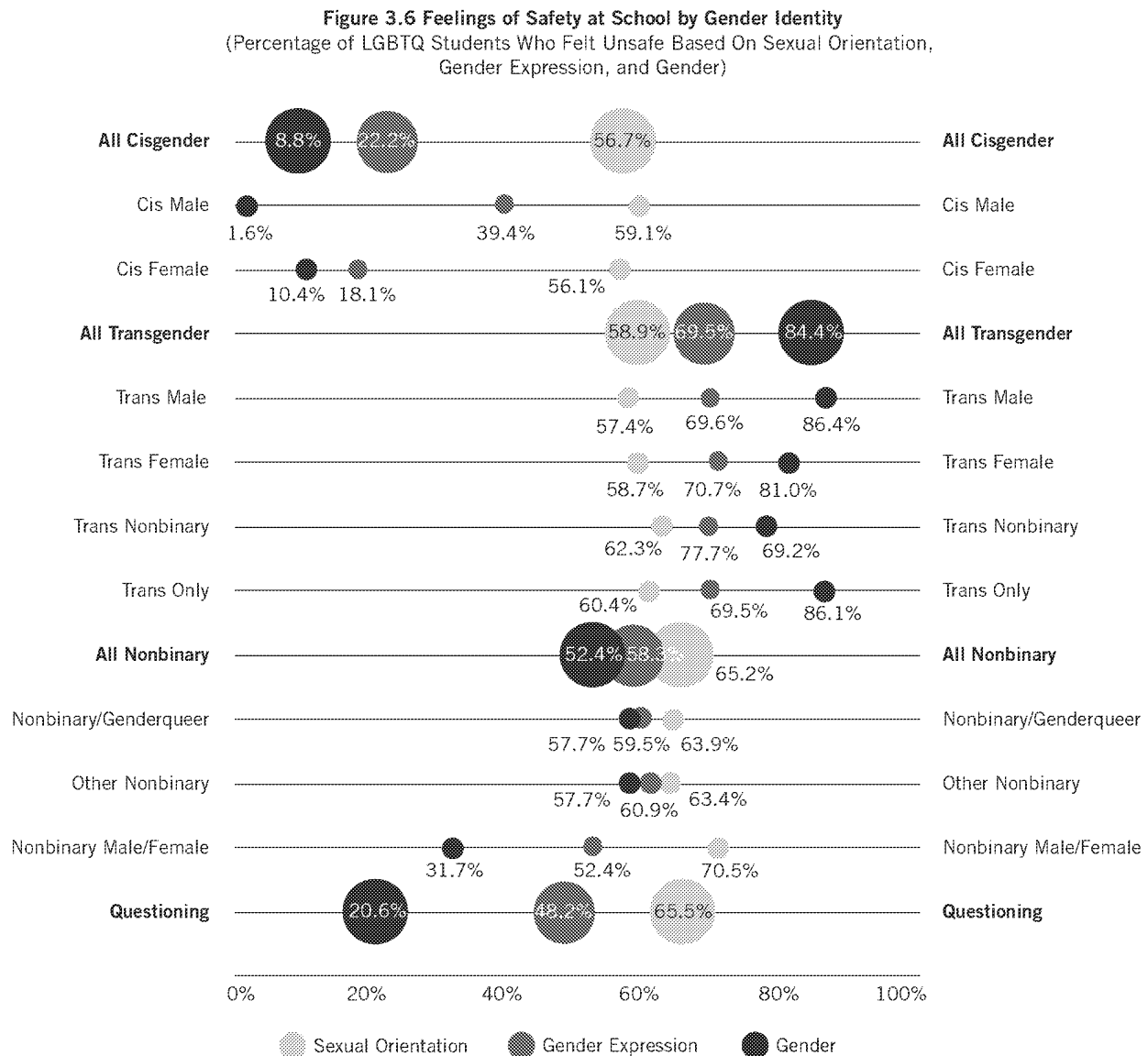
Educational attachment. A hostile school climate can affect students’ feelings of school belonging, can result in students avoiding school altogether,

and can hinder students' overall educational experience. We found that transgender students were:

- Less likely than other students to feel connected to their school, i.e., reported lower levels of school belonging;²⁰²
- More likely than other students to report missing school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (see Figure 3.9);²⁰³
- More likely than other students to report having changed schools because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (see also Figure 3.9);²⁰⁴ and

More likely than other students to report that they were not planning to complete high school or were not sure if they would complete high school.²⁰⁵

Discriminatory policies and practices. As shown in Figure 3.10, transgender students were more likely, overall, to report incidences with discriminatory policies and practices²⁰⁶ — 77.3% of transgender students reported having been discriminated against compared to 46.1% of cisgender students and 69.1% of nonbinary students. Certain forms of discrimination are more specific to the experiences of transgender and nonbinary students, such as being prevented from using the bathroom consistent with one's gender identity. Thus, it is



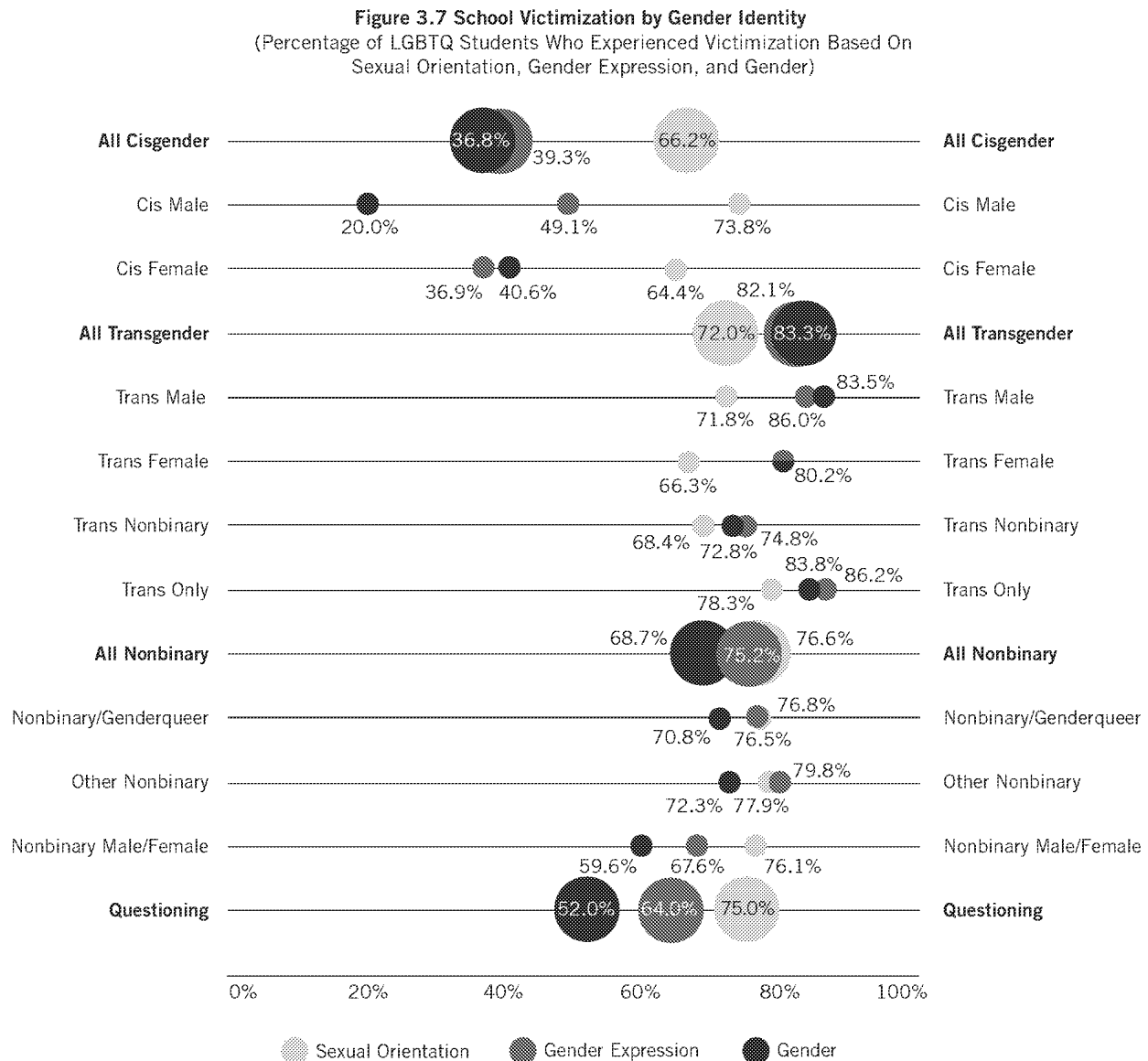
not surprising that transgender students reported more of these incidents than cisgender students.²⁰⁷ Compared to cisgender students, as shown in Table 3.1, transgender students were:

- More likely to be required to use the bathroom of their legal sex (58.1% for transgender students vs. 10.8% for cisgender students);
- More likely to be required to use the locker room of their legal sex (55.5% vs. 10.7%);
- More likely to be prevented from using their chosen name and pronouns (44.5% vs. 7.3%); and

- More likely to be prevented from wearing clothing deemed “inappropriate” based on gender (20.5% vs. 15.1%).

As seen in Table 3.1, transgender students also reported more instances of being required to use the bathroom and locker room of their legal sex and being prevented from using their chosen name and pronouns than nonbinary students.²⁰⁸ However, transgender and nonbinary students reported similar rates of being prevented from wearing clothing deemed “inappropriate” based on gender.

In addition to the specific types of gender-related discrimination noted above, transgender students were also more likely than cisgender LGBTQ



students to experience all forms of anti-LGBTQ discrimination, including broader forms of LGBTQ discrimination, such as being prevented from addressing LGBTQ topics in class assignments and being unfairly disciplined for identifying as LGBTQ.²⁰⁹ It may be that transgender and nonbinary students are generally more targeted for discipline because they are more visible and/or more stigmatized than other LGBTQ students. Further research is needed to explore these disparities and the factors that determine which students are most often targeted by discriminatory policies and practices.

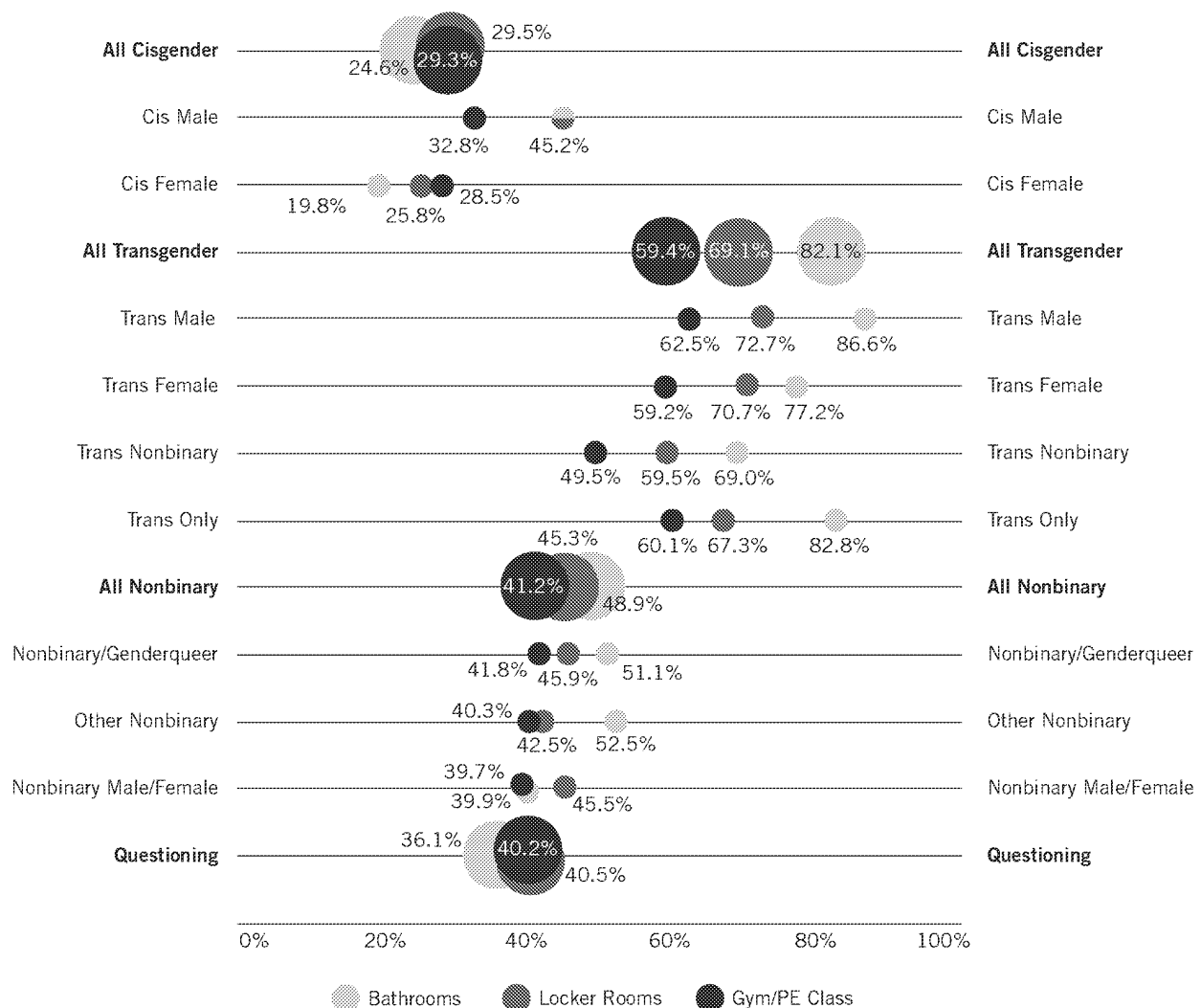
School discipline. Compared to cisgender LGBTQ students, transgender students reported (see Figure 3.11):

- Higher rates of in-school discipline (e.g. principal's office, detention);²¹⁰ and
- Higher rates of out-of-school discipline (e.g., out of school suspension, expulsion).²¹¹

Differences among transgender students.

Transgender students in our survey fell into four different categories: 1) those who identified as transgender and male, 2) those who identified as transgender and female, 3) those who identified as transgender and nonbinary or genderqueer (i.e., transgender nonbinary), and 4) those who identified only as transgender and no other gender identity (referred to as “transgender only” for the rest of this section). Transgender students, in general, experienced the most hostile school climates

Figure 3.8 Avoiding Spaces at School by Gender Identity
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Who Avoided Spaces)



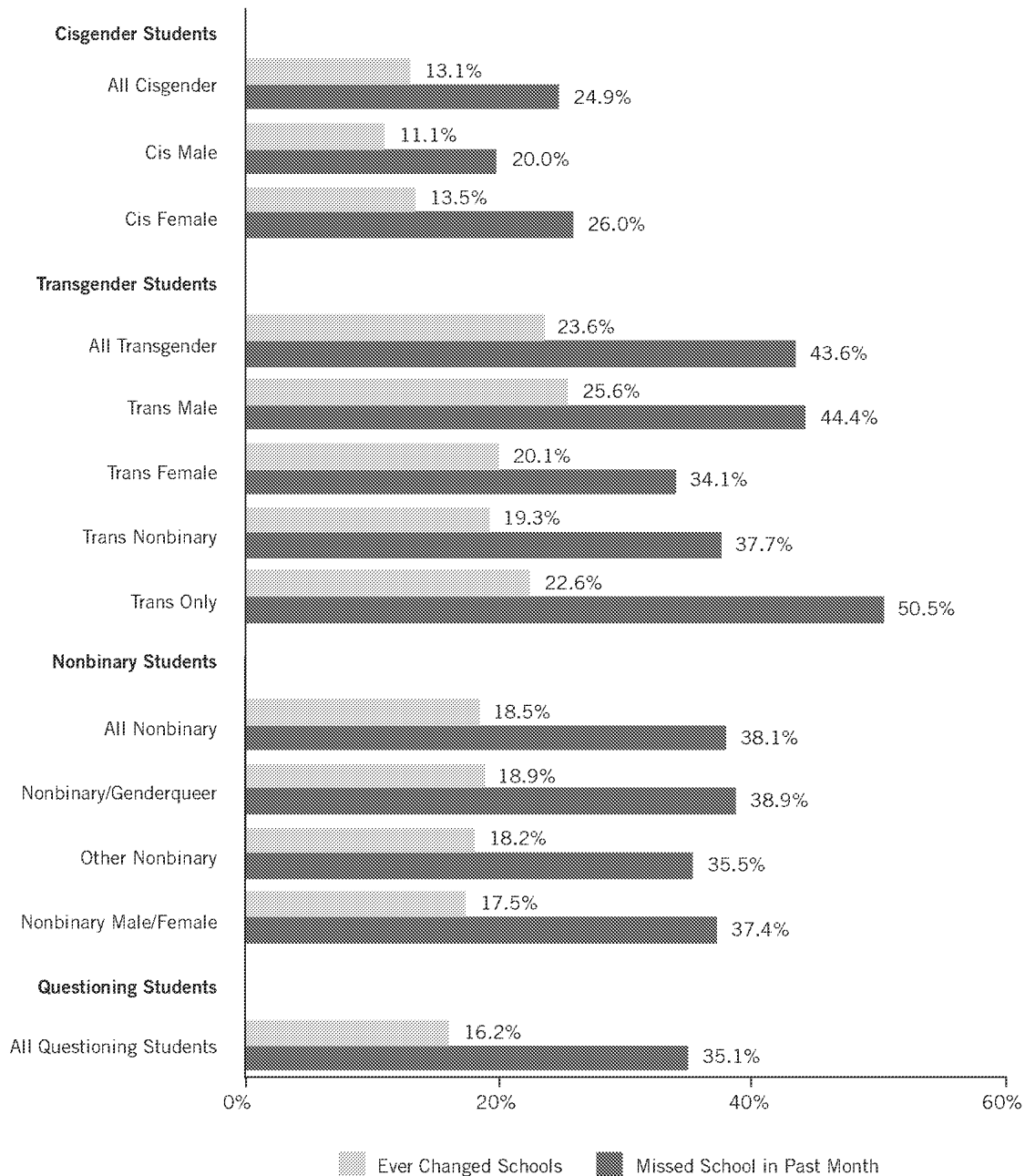
compared to their peers, and we wanted to further examine whether school experiences varied across these four groups of transgender students. We found some significant differences within the group of transgender students regarding victimization, feelings of unsafety because of gender, experiencing discriminatory policies and practices, avoiding certain school spaces, and missing school.

Victimization and safety. There were no differences among transgender students in feeling unsafe at

school because of their sexual orientation or because of their gender expression. However, transgender nonbinary students were less likely to feel unsafe at school because of their gender than were transgender male and transgender only students (see Figure 3.6).²¹²

With regard to victimization based on sexual orientation, transgender only students reported higher rates than transgender nonbinary and transgender male students, but did not differ from

Figure 3.9 Percentage of LGBTQ Students Who Missed School or Changed Schools Because of Safety Concerns by Gender Identity



transgender female students. Furthermore, there were no differences between transgender male and transgender female students on victimization based on sexual orientation (see Figure 3.7).²¹³

With regard to victimization based on gender expression, transgender only students reported higher rates than transgender male and transgender nonbinary students, but did not differ from transgender female students, and transgender female and transgender male students

did not differ. However, transgender male students reported higher rates than did transgender nonbinary students (see also Figure 3.7).²¹⁴

With regard to victimization based on gender, transgender male students reported higher rates than did transgender only students. In addition, transgender nonbinary students reported lower rates than transgender male and transgender only students (see Figure 3.7).²¹⁵

Figure 3.10 Percentage of LGBTQ Students Who Experienced Anti-LGBTQ Discrimination at School by Gender Identity

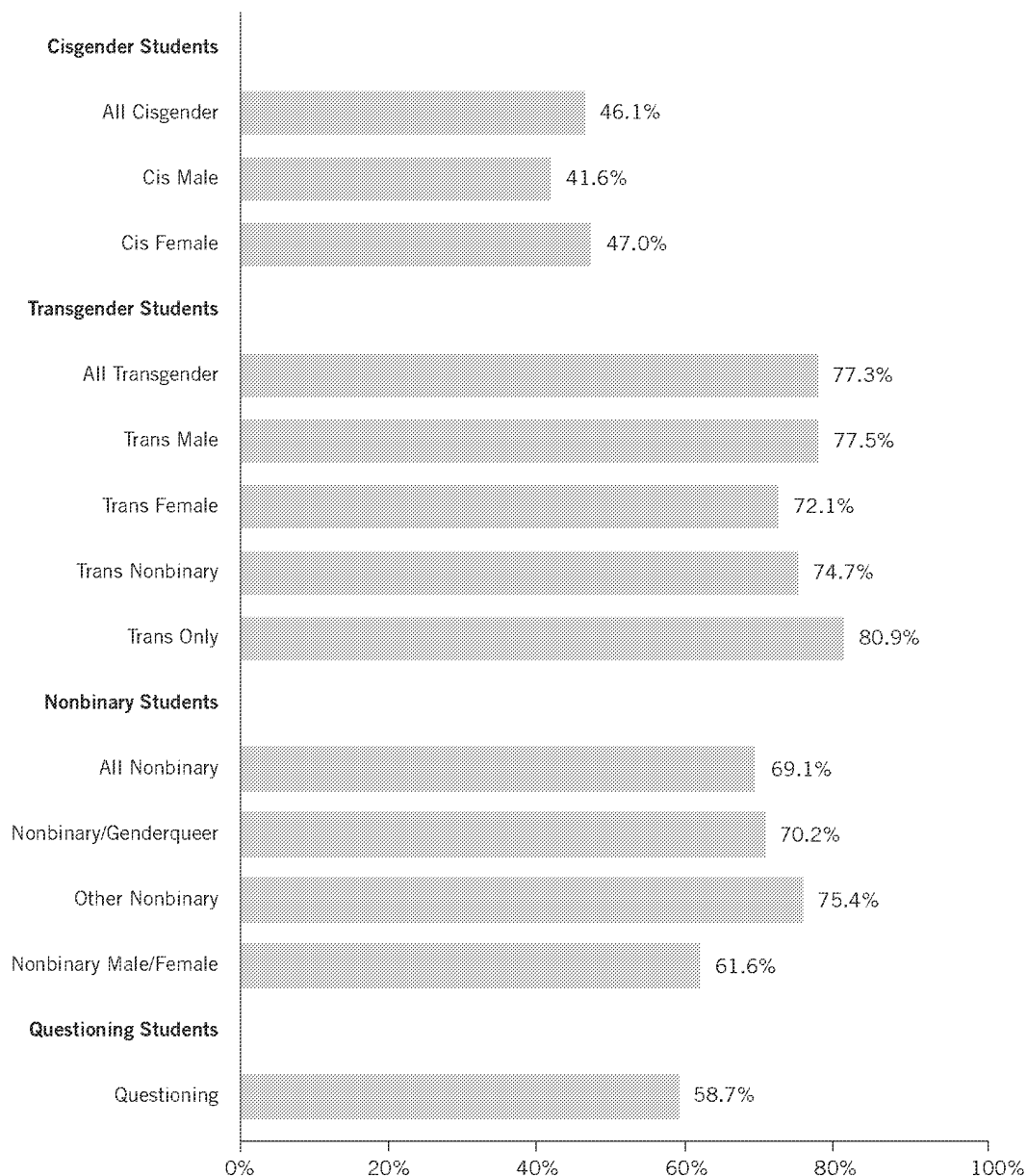


Table 3.1 Gender-Related Discrimination by Gender Identity²¹⁶

	Bathrooms	Locker Rooms	Names/ Pronouns	Gendered Clothing
All Cisgender Students²¹⁷	10.8%	10.7%	7.3%	15.1%
Cis Male Students	9.8%	9.5%	5.7%	15.5%
Cis Female Students	11.0%	10.9%	7.5%	15.0%
All Transgender Students²¹⁸	58.1%	55.5%	44.5%	20.5%
Trans Male Students	58.9%	57.7%	44.1%	19.5%
Trans Female Students	50.8%	51.9%	36.6%	26.1%
Trans Nonbinary Students	51.2%	45.7%	43.5%	19.0%
Trans Only Students	65.6%	60.4%	49.0%	24.6%
All Genderqueer and Other Nonbinary Students²¹⁹	35.5%	32.8%	36.3%	24.1%
Nonbinary/Genderqueer students	38.2%	34.7%	39.8%	24.9%
Other Nonbinary Students	38.8%	37.7%	38.6%	38.6%
Nonbinary Male/Female Students	24.5%	23.3%	23.5%	23.5%
Questioning Students	20.8%	19.6%	18.6%	19.5%

Avoiding school spaces. Transgender students also differed in their avoidance of gendered school spaces because they felt unsafe in them. Transgender nonbinary students were less likely to avoid bathrooms, locker rooms, and gym/PE class than were transgender male and transgender only students.²²⁰ As seen in Figure 3.8, transgender male, transgender female, and transgender only students avoided these spaces at similar rates.

Educational attachment. Transgender only students were more likely than other transgender students to have missed school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (see Figure 3.9).²²¹ Transgender male and transgender female students did not differ in their rates of missing school; however, transgender male students were more likely to change schools for safety reasons than were transgender nonbinary students (see Figure 3.9).²²² Educational aspirations did not differ by transgender identity — there were no differences in transgender students' plans to complete high school.²²³

Discriminatory policies and practices. When considering overall experiences with anti-LGBTQ discriminatory policies and practices, there were no significant differences among transgender students (see Figure 3.10).²²⁴ There were, however, significant differences across transgender students when specifically examining gender-specific discriminatory policies and practices:

- Regarding being prevented from wearing clothes that align with their gender, transgender male and transgender female students reported similar rates, but transgender only students reported this kind of discrimination slightly more than transgender nonbinary students (see Table 3.1).²²⁵
- Regarding being prevented from using the bathroom that aligns with their gender, transgender only students were more likely to report this form of discrimination than other transgender students (see Table 3.1).²²⁶ Additionally, transgender male students were more likely than transgender nonbinary students to report this type of discrimination.
- Regarding being denied locker room access, transgender male and transgender only students did not differ, but both groups were more likely to report being prevented from using the locker room that aligns with their gender than were transgender nonbinary students (see Table 3.1).²²⁷

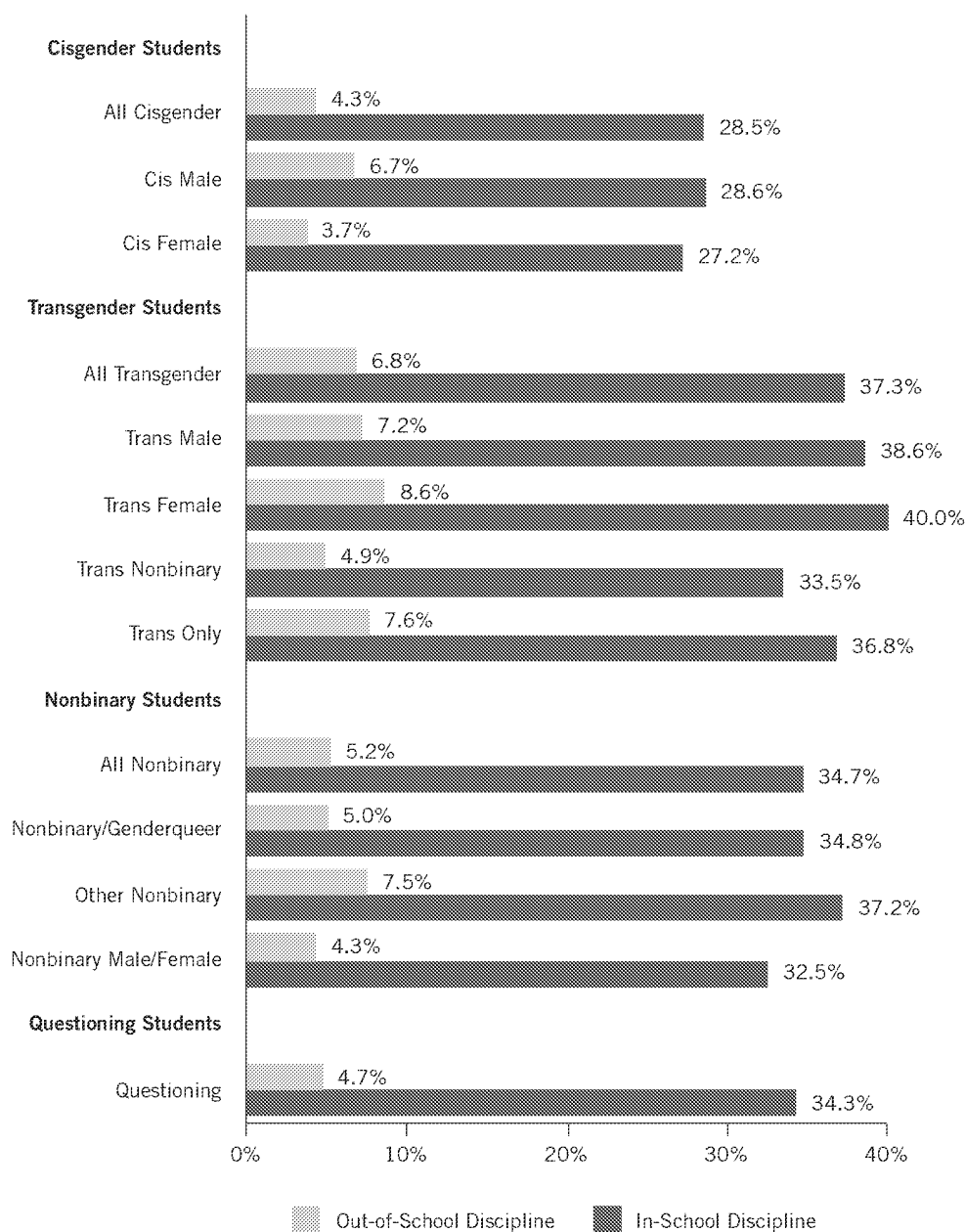
Overall, these findings suggest that transgender only students may experience somewhat more hostile school climates and that transgender nonbinary students may experience somewhat less hostile climates than other transgender students. Additionally, transgender male and transgender

female students in our sample experienced generally similar school climates. However, regarding certain indicators of school climate that we examined, transgender female students appeared to have more negative experiences, even though they were not statistically different. For example, when considering discriminatory policies and practices, transgender female students seem to report higher rates of gender-based clothing discrimination than other transgender students, but

this difference was not statistically significant. Our sample included a small number of transgender female students, compared to all other gender identities (1.1% of the full sample), and we may have been unable to detect statistically significant differences with this small of a sample.

There is no consensus in the literature regarding differences between transgender males and transgender females regarding mental health. Some

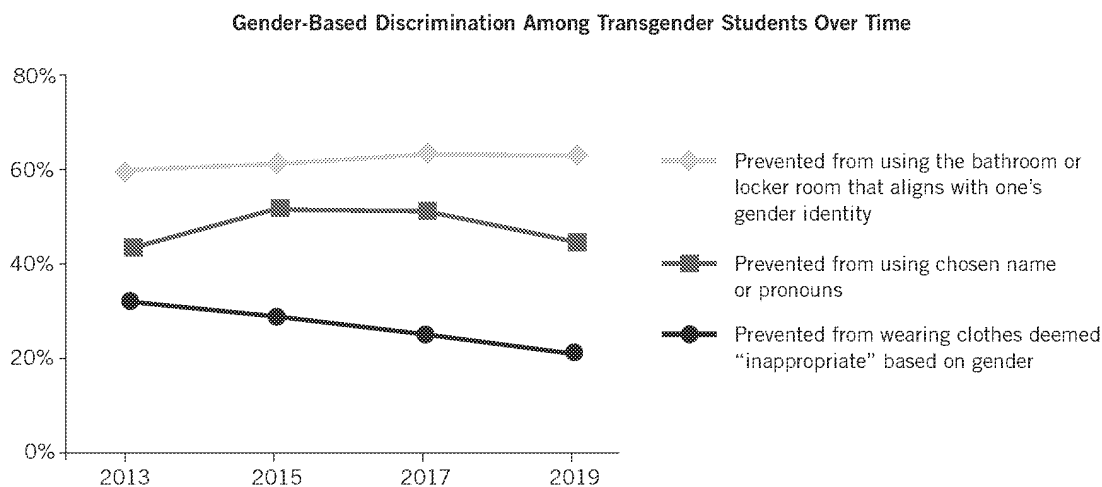
Figure 3.11 Comparison by Gender Identity:
Percentage of LGBTQ Students Who Experienced School Discipline



Insight on Gender-Related Discrimination Among Transgender Students Over Time

As discussed in the “School Climate and Gender” section of this report, transgender students were more likely to experience discrimination at school than students of all other gender identities in our 2019 survey. Given that there has been much public and political discourse in recent years regarding the rights of transgender youth to access bathrooms and locker rooms that align with their gender, we examined whether there have been changes in recent years in the experiences of transgender students with regard to gender-related discrimination at school.¹

As shown in the figure, with regard to being prevented from wearing clothing deemed “inappropriate” based on gender, there had been a significant decline in the percentage of transgender students reporting this type of discrimination from 2015 to 2017, and from 2017 to 2019. With regard to being prevented from using one’s chosen name or pronoun, there was an increase in the percentage of transgender students reporting this type of discrimination from 2013 to 2015 and no change from 2015 to 2017. However, there was a significant decrease from 2017 to 2019. With regard to being prevented from using the bathroom or locker room that aligns with one’s gender identity, there were no differences across years in the percentage of transgender students experiencing this discrimination.



Considering these findings together, it appears that schools may be becoming more accepting with regard to transgender students’ expression of their identity through their clothing and use of their chosen names and pronouns. However, schools have remained unchanged in their restrictions of transgender students’ use of school facilities that align with their gender identity. It is also important to note that the enforcement of dress code or use of name or pronoun may be more likely to happen as a result of actions by an individual school staff person, and findings with regard to those two forms of discrimination may indicate how attitudes of teachers and other school staff may be changing with regard to transgender students. In contrast, restrictions on use of facilities and policies codifying such restrictions may more likely be the responsibility of school administrators or school district officials. Thus, more education and advocacy may be indicated at the administrative level of U.S. schools.

¹ To test differences in the percentages of transgender students experiencing gender-related discrimination at school, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was performed, controlling for demographic and method differences across the survey years, with Survey Year as the independent variable and the three gender-related discrimination items as dependent variables. Note that in 2017, the question about access to locker rooms and bathrooms was split into two questions; thus, we recombined the two questions for 2017 and 2019 by taking the higher of the two values in order to compare with prior years. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai’s Trace = .01, $F(9, 34938) = 17.34$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .00$. Univariate and post hoc comparisons were considered at $p < .05$, and only significant pairwise differences are listed. The univariate effect for discrimination regarding clothing was significant: $F(3, 11646) = 24.43$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .01$; 2019 < all; 2017 < 2013, 2015. The univariate effect for discrimination regarding use of name and pronoun was significant: $F(3, 11646) = 19.52$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .01$; 2019 < 2017, 2015; 2015 > 2019, 2013; 2005 > 2019, 2013; 2013 < 2017, 2015. The univariate effect for discrimination regarding locker room and bathroom access was not significant at $p < .05$.

research has found that transgender males and transgender females do not differ with regard to some mental health outcomes;²²⁸ some has found that transgender males have poorer outcomes than transgender females,²²⁹ and some has indicated transgender males have better outcomes.²³⁰ In addition to this lack of consensus on differences between transgender males and females, there is very little research on transgender nonbinary people.²³¹ Furthermore, even less is known about people who identify as only transgender, with no additional gender identity (what we refer to in our sample as “transgender only.”). Considering that transgender only students in our survey experienced the most hostile climate, future research should further investigate this population of transgender people to increase knowledge and understanding of this identity. Of the research that exists on transgender and nonbinary people, very little is on transgender youth populations, and thus, our findings on transgender youth and other research on transgender adults are not wholly comparable, and differences between research studies could be due to developmental or generational differences. Clearly, further research is needed to explore differences among transgender students and potential factors accounting for those differences.

Experiences of Nonbinary Students

In addition to those transgender students who identified as nonbinary (see above), there were other students in our survey who endorsed a nonbinary identity but did not also identify as transgender. This group included students who identified as “nonbinary,” “genderqueer,” and those who wrote in identities outside the gender binary, such as “bigender,” “agender,” or “genderfluid.” Some nonbinary students also identified as male or female, but not cisgender or transgender. As reported above in the “Experiences of Transgender Students” section, nonbinary students had somewhat better school experiences than transgender-identified students. Compared to transgender students, nonbinary students were:

- Less likely to feel unsafe²³² or be victimized²³³ based on their gender and their gender expression (see Figure 3.6 and Figure 3.7, respectively);
- Less likely to avoid gender segregated spaces in schools, such as bathrooms, locker rooms, and Gym/PE class (see Figure 3.8);²³⁴

- Less likely to avoid athletic fields or facilities;²³⁵
- More likely to feel connected to school, and report positive school belonging;²³⁶
- Less likely to have been prevented from using the locker rooms and bathrooms that match their gender and to have been prevented from using their chosen name and pronouns (see Table 3.1);²³⁷
- Less likely to have missed school or changed schools because of safety concerns (see Figure 3.9);²³⁸ and
- Less likely to have been prevented from playing sports.²³⁹

However, nonbinary students were more likely than transgender students to feel unsafe based on sexual orientation (see Figure 3.6).²⁴⁰ In addition, nonbinary students did not differ from transgender students on victimization based on sexual orientation (see Figure 3.7).²⁴¹ They also did not differ from transgender students on experiences of in- and out-of-school discipline (see Figure 3.11).²⁴² Lastly, nonbinary students did not differ from transgender students in avoiding school spaces or in experiences with anti-LGBTQ discriminatory policies and practices that were not gender-specific, except for the differences in sports and athletics related spaces and discrimination mentioned above.

Compared to cisgender LGBTQ students, nonbinary students were:

- More likely to feel unsafe²⁴³ at school and to experience higher levels of victimization²⁴⁴ at school based on sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender (see Figures 3.6 and 3.7);
- More likely to avoid bathrooms, locker rooms, and Gym/Physical Education class because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (see Figure 3.8);²⁴⁵
- More likely to report both missing school and changing school for safety reasons (see Figure 3.9);²⁴⁶
- More likely to experience discrimination at school, particularly for gender-related

discrimination such as names/pronouns or locker room access (see Table 3.1);²⁴⁷ and

- More likely to experience in-school discipline (see Figure 3.11).²⁴⁸

Differences among nonbinary students. In examining differences among students who identified as nonbinary — those who identified as nonbinary or genderqueer, some other nonbinary identity, or as nonbinary and also male or female — we found few differences between nonbinary and genderqueer students and other nonbinary students. However, we did find significant differences between nonbinary male or female students compared to other students in the nonbinary group. Compared to other students in the nonbinary group, the group of nonbinary students who also identified as male or female were:

- Less likely to feel unsafe²⁴⁹ and experience victimization²⁵⁰ based on their gender (see Figures 3.6 and 3.7);
- Less likely to avoid bathrooms because of safety concerns (see Figure 3.8);²⁵¹ and
- Less likely to experience gender-related discrimination, including pronoun and name usage and bathroom and locker room access (see Table 3.1).²⁵²

Experiences of Cisgender LGBQ Students

Overall, most LGBQ cisgender students faced hostile school climates, but experienced fewer negative experiences in school than did transgender students and nonbinary students. Compared to transgender and nonbinary students, cisgender students:

- Were less likely to feel unsafe based on sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender (see Figure 3.6);²⁵³
- Experienced lower levels of victimization based on sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender (see Figures 3.7);²⁵⁴
- Were less likely to avoid gender-segregated and all other spaces due to safety concerns (see Figure 3.8);²⁵⁵
- Were less likely to report missing school or changing schools due to safety concerns (see Figure 3.9);²⁵⁶

- Were less likely to experience anti-LGBTQ discrimination in school (see Figure 3.10);²⁵⁷

- Experienced lower rates of in-school discipline (see Figure 3.11);²⁵⁸ and

- Were more likely to report that they planned to continue school after high school (94.5% for cisgender vs. 88.2% for transgender and 91.6% for nonbinary students).²⁵⁹

Differences among cisgender LGBQ students.

There were a few notable differences between cisgender male and cisgender female LGBQ students. Compared to cisgender female students, cisgender male students:

- Were more likely to feel unsafe because of their gender expression²⁶⁰ and experienced higher levels of victimization based on gender expression²⁶¹ (see Figures 3.6 and 3.7);
- Experienced higher levels of victimization based on sexual orientation (see Figure 3.7);²⁶²
- Were more likely to avoid gender segregated spaces, i.e. bathrooms, locker rooms, and Gym/ PE class (see Figure 3.8);²⁶³ and
- Reported higher rates of school discipline (see Figure 3.11).²⁶⁴

In contrast, compared to cisgender male students, cisgender female students:

- Were more likely to feel unsafe because of their gender²⁶⁵ and experienced higher levels of victimization based on gender²⁶⁶ (see Figures 3.6 and 3.7);
- Were more likely to report missing school and changing schools because of safety concerns (see Figure 3.9);²⁶⁷ and
- Were more likely to report experiencing any form of anti-LGBTQ discrimination at school (47.0% vs 41.6%).²⁶⁸

It is important to note that both LGBQ cisgender male and female students reported frequent victimization and high rates of discrimination. Nevertheless, the above findings indicate that they also face some differing challenges. Cisgender male students experienced feeling less safe at school and experienced greater victimization

regarding gender expression than cisgender female students. It is possible that our society allows for more fluidity of gender expression for girls, particularly compared to boys. For example, it is often considered more acceptable for a girl to behave in ways deemed “masculine” than for a boy to behave in ways deemed “feminine.”²⁶⁹ Conversely, cisgender female students experienced lower feelings of safety and greater victimization than cisgender male students with regard to their gender, illustrating the additional ways that female students may experience sexism at school.

Experiences of Questioning Students

Little research exists on the experiences of youth who are questioning their gender identity. Overall, students in our survey who were questioning their gender identity experienced less hostile school climates than did transgender and nonbinary students. However, compared to cisgender students, questioning students:

- Were more likely to feel unsafe because of their gender expression and gender²⁷⁰ and experience victimization²⁷¹ based on these characteristics (see Figures 3.6 and 3.7);
- Were more likely to experience victimization based on their sexual orientation (see Figure 3.7);²⁷²
- Were more likely to avoid gendered spaces at school, including bathrooms, locker rooms, and PE classes (see Figure 3.8);²⁷³
- Were more likely to have missed school due to safety concerns (see Figure 3.9),²⁷⁴ and report positive school belonging;²⁷⁵
- Were more likely to report experiencing gender-based discrimination (see Table 3.1);²⁷⁶ and
- Were more likely to experience in-school discipline (see Figure 3.11).²⁷⁷

In some instances, questioning students had similar experiences to transgender and nonbinary students. For example, questioning students experienced in-school discipline at the same rate as transgender and nonbinary students (see Figure 3.11).²⁷⁸ Additionally, those three groups were similar in feeling unsafe²⁷⁹ and in the severity of victimization based on sexual orientation (see Figures 3.6 and

3.7).²⁸⁰ Furthermore, their school experiences differed quite significantly from cisgender students. These findings suggest that students questioning their gender may not be perceived as cisgender by their peers and teachers, leading to generally more hostile school experiences. When considering students who identify as “questioning,” it is also important to recognize that it is unknown which gender identities they are specifically questioning. It could be that these students are questioning whether or not they are cisgender. It is also possible that they know they are not cisgender, but are questioning their non-cisgender identity (for example, questioning whether they are transgender and male or nonbinary). This latter type of questioning could help explain why questioning students in our survey more frequently reported school experiences that were similar to transgender and nonbinary students than experiences that were similar to cisgender students.

Conclusions

Overall, we found that among the LGBTQ students in our survey, students whose identities do not align with their sex assigned at birth (i.e., transgender, nonbinary, genderqueer, and other nonbinary-identified students) faced a more hostile climate than their cisgender LGBTQ peers. Specifically, transgender students appear to face the most hostile school climates. Our findings also highlight that transgender and nonbinary students have less access to education than their peers — not only because they feel more unsafe and experience more victimization, but also because they often have restricted access within the school environment itself, specifically, a lack of access to gender segregated spaces. School staff need to be aware of the various ways that gender-segregated spaces may be particularly difficult for transgender and gender nonconforming youth to navigate, and should work to ensure that all students have equal access to school facilities. Educators must also be mindful that improving school climate for transgender and nonbinary students goes beyond ensuring that they can access school facilities like bathrooms and locker rooms. They must work to be inclusive and affirming of transgender and nonbinary students in their teaching and in their interactions with transgender and nonbinary students.

Among LGBTQ cisgender students, we found that cisgender male students encountered a more hostile school climate regarding their gender

expression and sexual orientation, whereas cisgender female students encountered a more hostile school climate with regard to their gender. Both the bias experienced by cisgender male students based on gender expression (i.e., stigmatizing boys who are perceived to be “feminine”) and the bias experienced by

cisgender female students based on gender can be considered manifestations of misogyny, in that they demonstrate hostility towards females and femininity. Thus, it is critical that efforts to combat victimization and marginalization of LGBTQ students at school also incorporate efforts to combat sexism.

School Climate and Racial/Ethnic Identity

Key Findings

- All LGBTQ students of color experienced similar levels of victimization based on race/ethnicity, although Black students were more likely to feel unsafe about their race/ethnicity than AAPI, Latinx, Native and Indigenous, multiracial, and White students.
- Native and Indigenous LGBTQ students were generally more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to experience anti-LGBTQ victimization and discrimination.
- Many LGBTQ students of color experienced victimization based on both their race/ethnicity and their LGBTQ identities. The percentages of students of color experiencing these multiple forms of victimization were similar across racial/ethnic groups.
- White students were less likely than all other racial/ethnic groups to feel unsafe or experience victimization because of their racial/ethnic identity.

As discussed previously in this report, many LGBTQ students feel unsafe at school or face identity-based victimization related to a variety of personal characteristics, including race/ethnicity. Furthermore, for students with multiple marginalized identities, such as LGBTQ youth of color, multiple forms of oppression may interact with and affect one another.²⁸¹ For example, the racism that an LGBTQ student of color experiences at school may impact the homophobia or transphobia that they experience, and vice versa.²⁸² Thus, we examined school climate for different racial/ethnic groups²⁸³ of LGBTQ students in our survey: Arab American, Middle Eastern, and North African (MENA); Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian (AAPI); Black; Latinx;²⁸⁴ Native American, American Indian, and Alaska Native (referred to as “Native and Indigenous” in this section); multiracial; and White students. Specifically, we examined safety and victimization related to sexual orientation, gender expression, and race/ethnicity. We further examined how anti-LGBTQ bias may manifest for different racial/ethnic groups by also examining their experiences with anti-LGBTQ discriminatory school policies and practices. Finally, given previous research that indicates some youth of color may be disproportionately targeted by school staff for disciplinary action, as compared to their White peers,²⁸⁵ we also examined students’ experiences with school disciplinary action, including: in-school discipline (including referral to the principal, detention, and in-school suspension), out-of-school discipline (including out-of-school suspension and expulsion), and contact with the criminal justice system as a result of school discipline.

Throughout this section, we present the school experiences of each racial/ethnic group of LGBTQ students, and we specifically note statistically significant differences between groups. Further, because differences in outness and student body racial composition may also impact students’ school experiences, we account for these and other demographic and school characteristics in our analyses, as appropriate.

Experiences of Arab American, Middle Eastern, and North African (MENA) LGBTQ Students

Just over a quarter of MENA LGBTQ students (26.2%) felt unsafe at school regarding their race/ethnicity (see Figure 3.12), and nearly half

(46.9%) were bullied or harassed based on their actual or perceived racial/ethnic identity (see Figure 3.13). We also found that MENA students were more likely than White students to feel unsafe²⁸⁶ and to experience harassment²⁸⁷ based on race/ethnicity.

The majority of MENA LGBTQ students reported negative school experiences related to their LGBTQ identity. Most (61.0%) felt unsafe regarding their sexual orientation, and over a third (40.5%) felt unsafe based on the way they express their gender, although we did not observe differences with other students (see Figure 3.12).²⁸⁸ Approximately two-thirds (67.5%) experienced harassment or assault related to their sexual orientation, and nearly two-thirds (64.7%) experienced this kind of victimization related to their gender expression (see Figure 3.13). For both victimization based on sexual orientation and based on gender expression, MENA LGBTQ students experienced greater levels of harassment than Black and AAPI LGBTQ students.²⁸⁹ Additionally, two-fifths of MENA LGBTQ students (42.2%) experienced both anti-LGBTQ and racist harassment at school.²⁹⁰

We also examined MENA LGBTQ students’ experiences with anti-LGBTQ discriminatory school policies and practices, and found that nearly two-thirds (63.3%) encountered this type of discrimination at school (see Figure 3.14). MENA students were more likely than AAPI students to experience this discrimination.²⁹¹

Many MENA LGBTQ students also experienced school discipline: 33.7% experienced some form of in-school discipline, and 7.2% experienced some form of out-of-school discipline (see Figure 3.15). Further, 1.4% had contact with law enforcement as a result of school discipline. We did not observe any differences between MENA students and others with regard to discipline.²⁹²

Experiences of Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian (AAPI) LGBTQ Students

Approximately a quarter of AAPI LGBTQ students (25.4%) felt unsafe at school regarding their race/ethnicity — less than Black LGBTQ students, but more than multiracial and White students (see Figure 3.12).²⁹³ Furthermore, just over half (51.2%) were assaulted or bullied based on their actual or perceived race/ethnicity, and they faced

more frequent race-based harassment than White students (see Figure 3.13).²⁹⁴

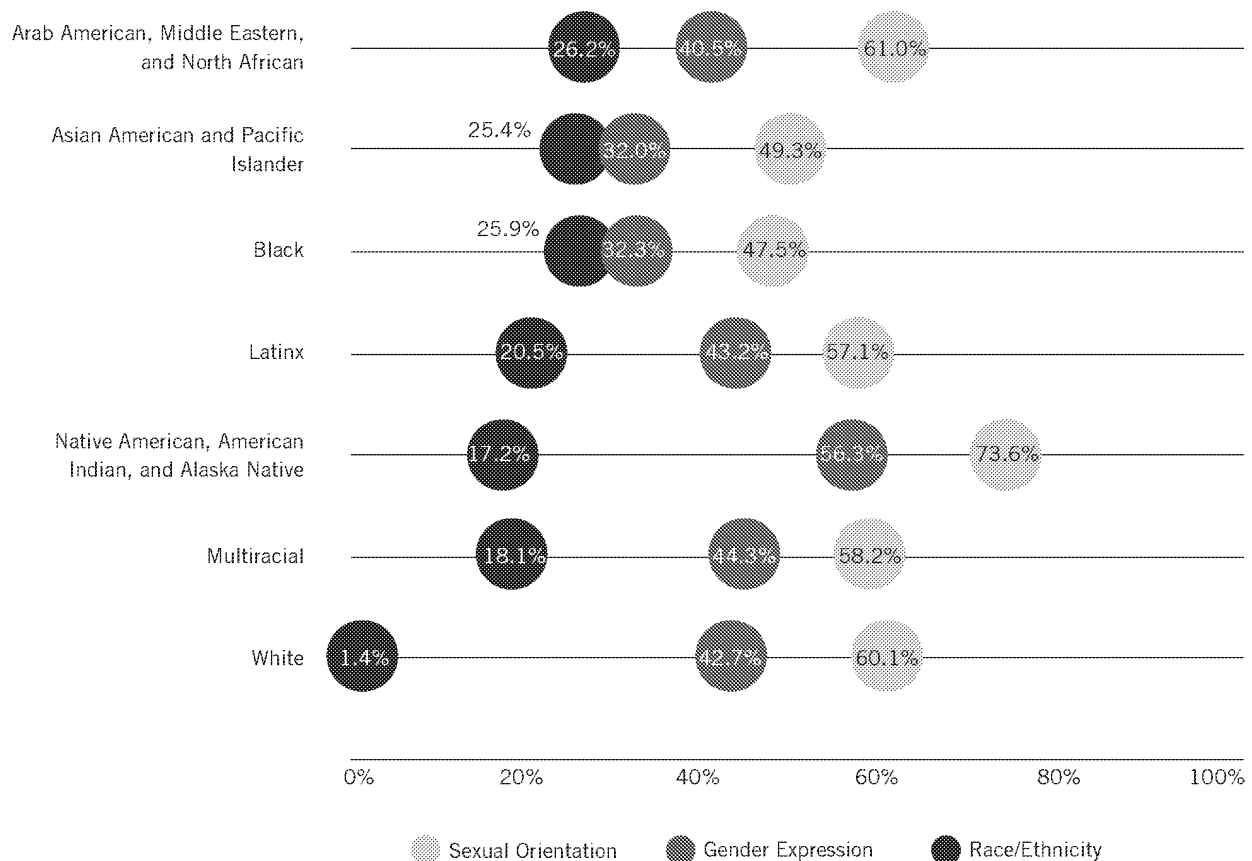
The majority of AAPI LGBTQ students reported negative school experiences regarding their LGBTQ identity, although these experiences were somewhat less common than for other racial/ethnic groups. Nearly half of AAPI students (49.3%) felt unsafe regarding their sexual orientation and nearly a third (32.0%) felt unsafe regarding the way they express their gender (see Figure 3.12). However, AAPI students were less likely than White, Latinx, and Native and Indigenous youth to feel unsafe for either reason, and were also less likely than multiracial students to feel unsafe about their gender expression.²⁹⁵ We also found that most AAPI LGBTQ students (55.7%) experienced harassment or assault related to their sexual orientation, and 43.5% experienced harassment or assault related to their gender expression (see Figure 3.13), although both were less severe than the victimization experienced by Latinx, MENA, Native

and Indigenous, White, and multiracial LGBTQ students.²⁹⁶ Despite the fact that AAPI students experienced comparatively lower levels of anti-LGBTQ experiences, it is important to note that two-fifths (40.8%) experienced both anti-LGBTQ and racist harassment at school.

Many AAPI LGBTQ students experienced anti-LGBTQ discriminatory school policies and practices. Over a third (35.5%) experienced anti-LGBTQ discrimination at school, although AAPI youth were less likely to experience this type of discrimination than all other racial/ethnic groups (see Figure 3.14).²⁹⁷

With regard to school disciplinary action, one-fifth of AAPI LGBTQ students (19.9%) experienced in-school discipline, although this was less than all others except Native and Indigenous students, and 2.8% experienced out-of-school discipline, which was less than Black LGBTQ youth (see Figure 3.15).²⁹⁸ Finally, 0.6% of AAPI students had

Figure 3.12 Sense of Safety at School by Race/Ethnicity



contact with law enforcement as a result of school discipline.

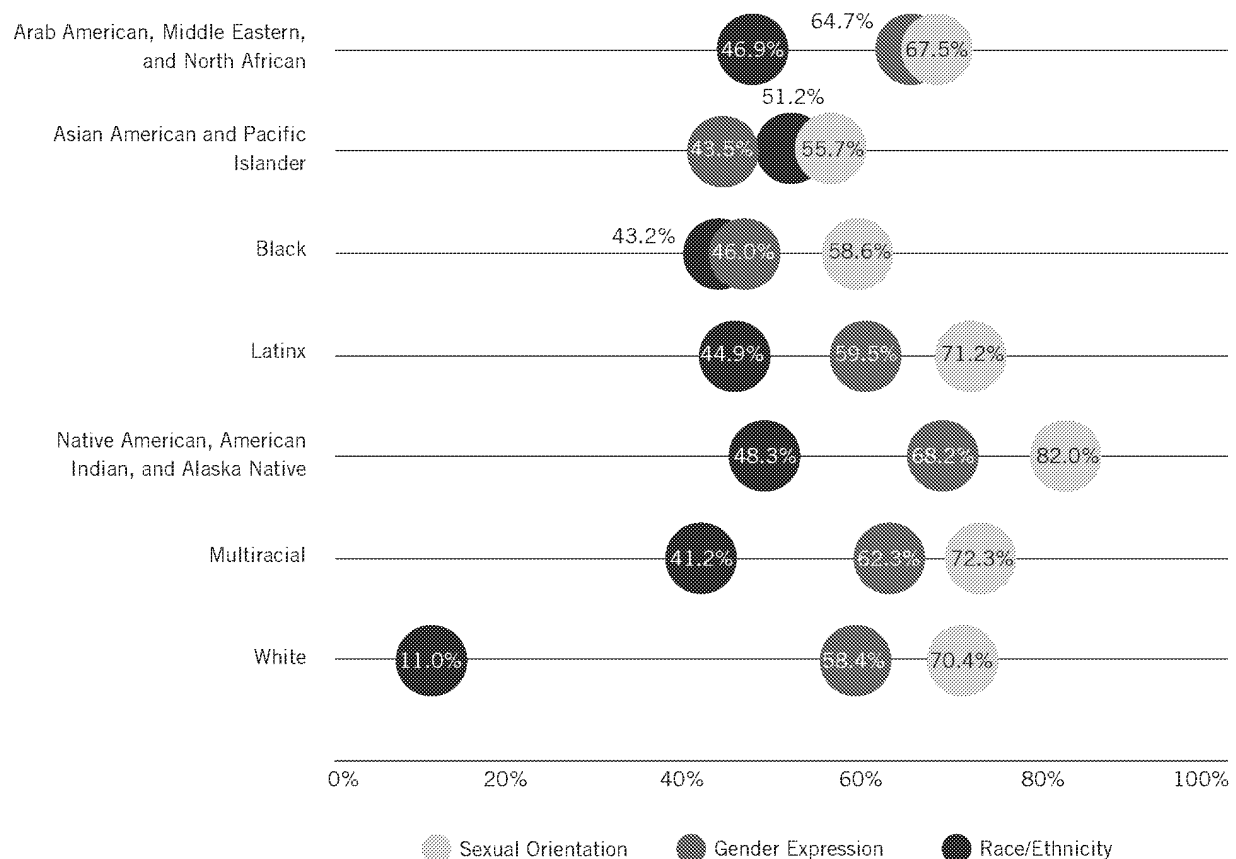
Experiences of Black LGBTQ Students

A quarter of Black LGBTQ students (25.9%) felt unsafe at school regarding their race/ethnicity (see Figure 3.12), and they were more likely than AAPI, Latinx, Native and Indigenous, multiracial, and White LGBTQ students to feel unsafe for this reason.²⁹⁹ Furthermore, 43.2% of Black students experienced harassment or bullying based on their actual or perceived race/ethnicity, which was more frequent than the race-based victimization faced by White students (see Figure 3.13).³⁰⁰

Most Black LGBTQ students also reported negative school experiences due to their LGBTQ identity, although they were generally less likely to do so than LGBTQ youth of other racial/ethnic identities.

Nearly half of Black students (47.5%) felt unsafe regarding their sexual orientation and approximately a third (32.3%) felt unsafe regarding their gender expression (see Figure 3.12). However, Black LGBTQ students were less likely than White, Latinx, and Native and Indigenous youth to feel unsafe about sexual orientation and gender expression, and were also less likely than multiracial students to feel unsafe about their gender expression.³⁰¹ Many Black LGBTQ students also experienced victimization based on their sexual orientation (58.6%) and their gender expression (46.0%), although they experienced lower levels of both forms of victimization than all other racial/ethnic groups except for AAPI students (see Figure 3.13).³⁰² Nevertheless, even though Black LGBTQ youth experienced comparatively lower levels of anti-LGBTQ victimization compared to most other students, over a third (34.7%) experienced both anti-LGBTQ and racist harassment at school.

Figure 3.13 Experiences of In-School Victimization Based on Personal Characteristics by Race/Ethnicity
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Who Experienced any Bullying, Harassment, or Assault Based on . . .)



Many Black LGBTQ students also experienced anti-LGBTQ discriminatory school policies and practices. Nearly half (48.3%) experienced this type of discrimination in school — more than AAPI students, but less than Latinx, White, multiracial, and Native and Indigenous (see Figure 3.14).³⁰³

With regard to school discipline, a third of Black LGBTQ students (33.3%) experienced in-school discipline and nearly a tenth (8.8%) experienced out-of-school discipline (see Figure 3.15). Black LGBTQ students were more likely to experience both forms of discipline than LGBTQ AAPI students, and were also more likely to experience out-of-school discipline than White LGBTQ students.³⁰⁴ Finally, 1.6% of Black LGBTQ students had contact with law enforcement as a result of school discipline.

Experiences of Latinx LGBTQ Students

Approximately a fifth of Latinx LGBTQ students (20.5%) felt unsafe at school regarding their race/ethnicity (see Figure 3.12), and nearly half (44.9%) experienced bullying or harassment related to their race or ethnicity (see Figure 3.13). Latinx students were more likely than White and multiracial students to feel unsafe regarding their race/ethnicity, but less likely than Black students.³⁰⁵ Latinx students were also more likely than White and multiracial students to experience bullying or harassment based on race/ethnicity.³⁰⁶

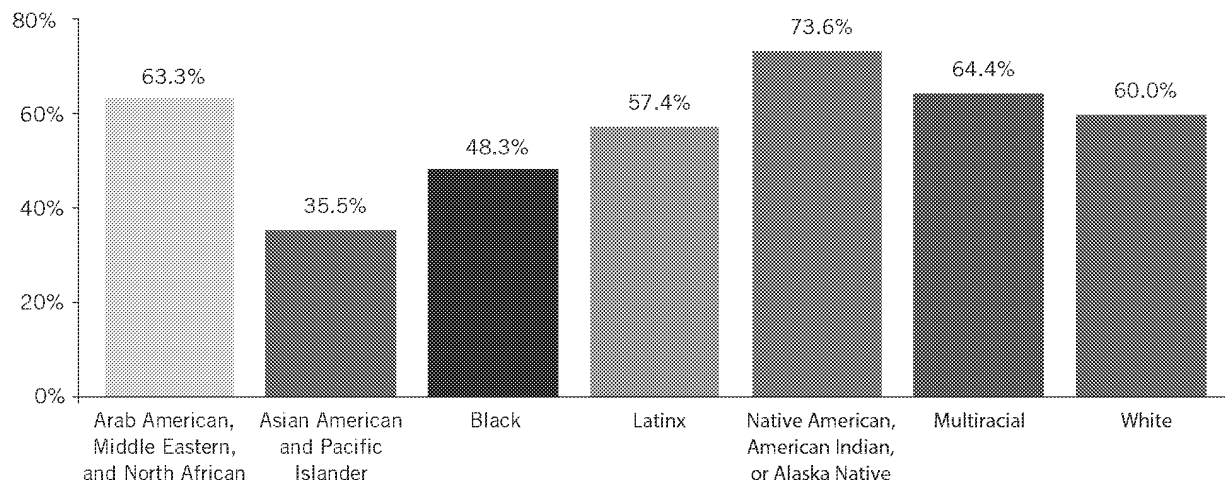
We also found that many Latinx students reported negative school experiences related to their LGBTQ

identity. Over half of Latinx LGBTQ students (57.1%) felt unsafe at school regarding their sexual orientation, more than a third (43.2%) felt unsafe regarding their gender expression, and they were more likely than Black and AAPI students to feel unsafe for these reasons (see Figure 3.12).³⁰⁷ Over two-thirds of Latinx students (71.2%) experienced peer victimization based on their sexual orientation, and over half (59.5%) experienced victimization based on how they express their gender (see Figure 3.13). Similar to feelings of safety, Latinx LGBTQ students were more likely than Black and AAPI students to experience both forms of anti-LGBTQ victimization, although they were less likely to experience homophobic victimization than Native and Indigenous LGBTQ students.³⁰⁸ Notably, two-fifths of Latinx LGBTQ students (41.0%) experienced both anti-LGBTQ and racist harassment at school.

The majority of Latinx LGBTQ students (57.4%) also experienced anti-LGBTQ discriminatory school policies and practices (see Figure 3.14). Latinx students were more likely than Black and AAPI students to experience this type of discrimination.³⁰⁹

Regarding school discipline, more than a third of Latinx LGBTQ students (35.1%) experienced in-school discipline — more than White and AAPI students — and 5.9% experienced some form of out-of-school discipline (see Figure 3.15).³¹⁰ Additionally, 1.5% had contact with law enforcement as a result of school discipline.

Figure 3.14 Experiences of Anti-LGBTQ Discrimination by Race/Ethnicity
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Experiencing Anti-LGBTQ Discriminatory School Policies and Practices)



Experiences of Native American, American Indian, and Alaska Native (“Native and Indigenous”) LGBTQ Students

Nearly one-fifth of Native and Indigenous LGBTQ students (17.2%) felt unsafe at school regarding their race/ethnicity (see Figure 3.12), and nearly half (48.3%) were bullied or harassed based on their actual or perceived race/ethnicity (see Figure 3.13). Native and Indigenous students were more likely than White students to feel unsafe regarding race/ethnicity, but less likely than Black students.³¹¹ Native and Indigenous students were also more likely than White students to experience victimization based on race/ethnicity.³¹²

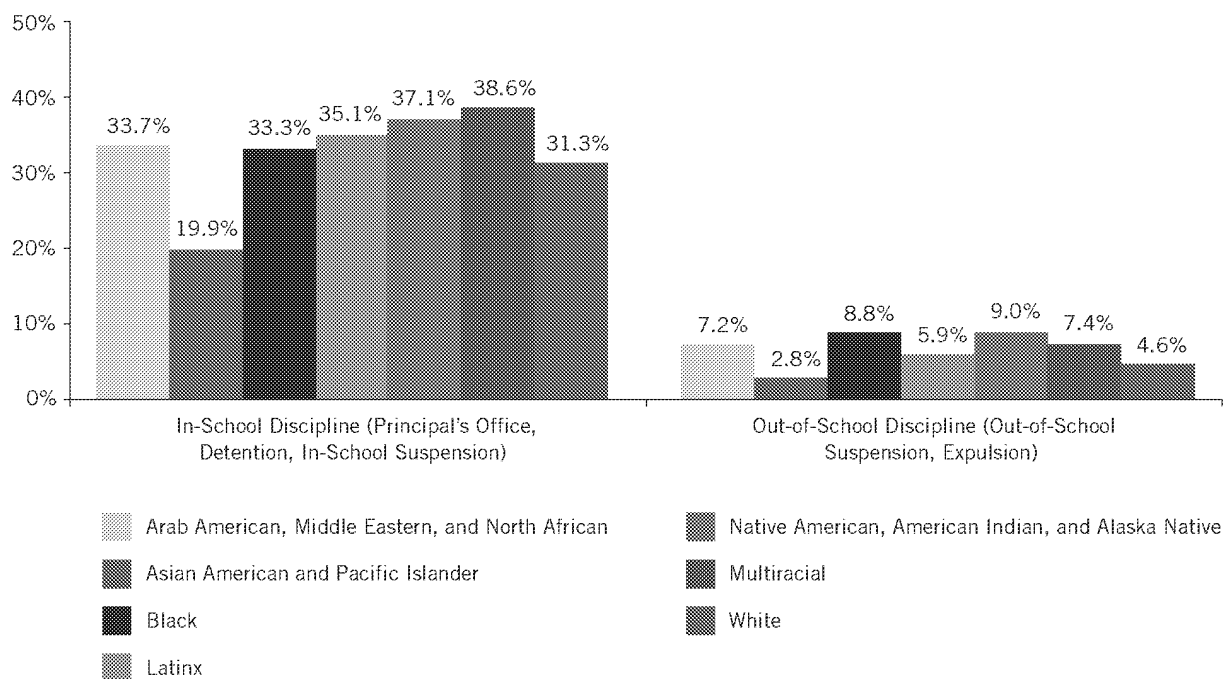
The vast majority of Native and Indigenous LGBTQ students reported negative school experiences related to their LGBTQ identity, and were generally more likely to report these experiences than other racial/ethnic groups. Nearly three quarters of Native and Indigenous LGBTQ students felt unsafe regarding their sexual orientation (73.6%) and over half (56.3%) because of the way they express their gender (see Figure 3.12). Native and Indigenous students were also more likely than Black and AAPI students to feel unsafe for both reasons.³¹³ As shown in Figure 3.13, over four-fifths of Native and Indigenous students (82.0%) experienced harassment and assault based on their

sexual orientation, and over two-thirds (68.2%) based on their gender expression. In fact, Native and Indigenous students experienced more severe homophobic victimization than all others, except for MENA students from whom they did not differ, and faced more severe victimization based on gender expression than White, Black, and AAPI students.³¹⁴ It is also important to note that nearly half (47.2%) experienced both anti-LGBTQ and racist harassment at school.

Experiences of anti-LGBTQ discriminatory school policies and practices were also common among Native and Indigenous students. Nearly three-fourths (73.6%) experienced this type of discrimination at school, and they were more likely to experience discrimination than Black and AAPI LGBTQ students (see Figure 3.14).³¹⁵

Many Native and Indigenous LGBTQ students also experienced school disciplinary practices. Nearly two-fifths (37.1%) experienced in-school discipline, and nearly one-tenth (9.0%) experienced some form of out-of-school discipline (see Figure 3.15). In addition, 2.2% had contact with law enforcement as a result of school discipline. We, however, did not observe any differences regarding discipline between Native and Indigenous students and other groups.³¹⁶

Figure 3.15 Experiences of School Discipline by Race/Ethnicity
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Who Experienced School Discipline)



“I feel... outnumbered, looked down upon. I have to work twice as hard just to be at par with a white boy with privilege, not to mention that being worse because of the fact that I’m not straight.”

Experiences of Multiracial LGBTQ Students

Nearly a fifth of multiracial LGBTQ students (18.1%) felt unsafe in school regarding their race/ethnicity (see Figure 3.12), and they were more likely to feel unsafe for this reason than White students, but less likely than MENA, Black, and AAPI students.³¹⁷ Additionally, over two-fifths (41.2%) faced harassment based on racial/ethnic identity, and they faced more frequent harassment than White LGBTQ students (see Figure 3.13).³¹⁸

Many multiracial LGBTQ students also reported negative school experiences regarding their LGBTQ identity. More than half (58.2%) felt unsafe at school regarding their sexual orientation, and more than two-fifths (44.3%) felt unsafe regarding the way they express their gender (see Figure 3.12). Although multiracial students did not differ from other students on feeling unsafe because of their sexual orientation, they were more likely than Black and AAPI students to feel unsafe regarding their gender expression.³¹⁹ The majority of multiracial LGBTQ students also experienced harassment regarding their LGBTQ identity — 72.3% faced harassment based on their sexual orientation and 62.3% experienced this victimization based on gender expression (see Figure 3.13). Multiracial students reported greater levels of homophobic victimization than Black and AAPI students, but lower levels than Native and Indigenous students. They also reported greater levels of victimization based on gender expression than Black and AAPI LGBTQ students.³²⁰ Notably, over a third of multiracial LGBTQ students (36.5%) experienced both racist and anti-LGBTQ harassment at school.

We also found that the majority of multiracial LGBTQ students experienced anti-LGBTQ discriminatory policies and practices at school. Nearly two-thirds (64.4%) experienced this type of discrimination — more than Black and AAPI students (see Figure 3.14).³²¹

Many multiracial LGBTQ students reported experiences with school discipline. Nearly two-

fifths of multiracial LGBTQ students (38.6%) experienced in-school discipline, and nearly a tenth (7.4%) experienced some form of out-of-school discipline (see Figure 3.15). Multiracial students were more likely to experience both in-school and out-of-school discipline than White youth, and were also more likely to experience in-school discipline than AAPI youth.³²² Finally, 1.3% of multiracial LGBTQ students had contact with law enforcement as a result of school discipline.

Experiences of White LGBTQ Students

A small number of White LGBTQ students (1.4%) felt unsafe at school regarding their race/ethnicity, and just over one-tenth (11.0%) experienced bullying or harassment based on their actual or perceived race/ethnicity (see Figures 3.12 and 3.13). Not surprisingly, White LGBTQ students were less likely than all other racial/ethnic groups to feel unsafe³²³ or experience bullying or harassment³²⁴ for this reason.

The majority of White LGBTQ students reported negative school experiences with regard to LGBTQ identity. Over half (60.1%) felt unsafe regarding their sexual orientation, and over two-fifths (42.7%) felt unsafe regarding their gender expression (see Figure 3.12). White students were more likely to feel unsafe regarding sexual orientation and gender expression than both Black and AAPI students.³²⁵ More than two-thirds of White LGBTQ students (70.4%) experienced victimization related to their sexual orientation, and over half (58.4%) experienced victimization related to gender expression (see Figure 3.13). Similar to feelings of safety, White students were more likely to face anti-LGBTQ victimization than Black and AAPI students, although they were less likely to experience this victimization than Native and Indigenous students.³²⁶ Although most White LGBTQ students had negative school experiences regarding their LGBTQ identity, only one-tenth (10.1%) experienced harassment based on both LGBTQ identity and actual or perceived race/ethnicity.

The majority of White LGBTQ youth (60.0%) experienced some form of anti-LGBTQ discrimination at school (see Figure 3.14). Furthermore, White students were more likely than Black and AAPI students to experience this form of discrimination.³²⁷

Regarding school discipline, just under a third of White LGBTQ students (31.3%) experienced some form of in-school discipline and 4.6% experienced out-of-school discipline (see Figure 3.15). White students were more likely than AAPI students to experience either form of discipline. However, they were less likely than multiracial and Latinx students to experience in-school discipline, and less likely than multiracial and Black students to report experiences with out-of-school discipline.³²⁸ Finally, 1.1% of White students had contact with law enforcement as a result of school discipline.

Conclusions

The majority of LGBTQ students of all races and ethnicities reported hostile school experiences due to their marginalized identities. Nevertheless, we observed some notable relationships between racial/ethnic identity and feelings of safety as well as experiences of victimization, discrimination, and disciplinary action in school.

With regard to students' experiences with race/ethnicity, it is interesting to note that nearly all LGBTQ students of color experienced similar rates of racist harassment, but Black LGBTQ students were more likely than nearly all others to feel unsafe about their race/ethnicity. In part, this may be related to the nature of racist victimization that Black LGBTQ students experience, which may occur at a similar rate but could be more severe than the harassment faced by other racial/ethnic groups. It is also likely that Black LGBTQ

students' feelings of safety about their race are related to other experiences of racism not captured in this survey, given this country's long, ongoing, and pervasive culture of racism against Black communities in particular.³²⁹

Black and AAPI LGBTQ students were both generally less likely than others to have had anti-LGBTQ experiences at school. Conversely, we found that Native and Indigenous LGBTQ students were more likely to have experienced anti-LGBTQ bias in school than other racial/ethnic groups. It is unclear why anti-LGBTQ experiences differ across racial/ethnic groups in this way, and further research is warranted regarding the relationship between racial/ethnic identity and anti-LGBTQ school experiences.

Despite the differences that we found, it is important to acknowledge that all LGBTQ youth of color were at greater risk of experiencing multiple forms of victimization than their White LGBTQ peers.³³⁰ Furthermore, our prior research has shown that LGBTQ youth of color who experienced both racist and anti-LGBTQ victimization at school reported the poorest well-being, and are most likely to feel unsafe at school, compared to those who experienced one or neither form of victimization.³³¹ Thus, school staff must support LGBTQ youth of color with an intersectional approach that acknowledges and responds to racism, homophobia, and transphobia, and to the ways these interconnected forms of oppression may influence one another. This approach must also acknowledge the uniquely harmful impact of racism on Black students and Black communities, in particular. Further research is needed to critically examine how school climate manifests for LGBTQ students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, as well as best practices to serve these populations of youth.

School Climate by School Characteristics

Key Findings

- LGBTQ students in middle school had more hostile school experiences and less access to LGBTQ-related school supports than LGBTQ students in high school.
- LGBTQ students in private non-religious schools experienced a less hostile school climate than those in public or religious schools. LGBTQ students in private non-religious schools also had greater access to most LGBTQ-related school supports, however public schools were more likely to have a GSA and most likely to have LGBTQ-inclusive school library resources.
- Among students in public schools, those in charter schools were similar to those in regular public schools regarding anti-LGBTQ experiences and many resources and supports, although charter school students were more likely to have access to: inclusive curricular resources, supportive policies for transgender and nonbinary students, and a supportive administration. Regular public school students were more likely to have LGBTQ-inclusive school library resources.
- LGBTQ students in small towns or rural areas were most likely to hear anti-LGBTQ remarks, and experience anti-LGBTQ victimization and discrimination than students in urban and suburban schools. They were also least likely to have access to LGBTQ-related school supports.
- LGBTQ students in schools in the South were most likely to hear anti-LGBTQ remarks, and experience anti-LGBTQ victimization and discrimination than students in other regions. They were also least likely to have access to LGBTQ-related school supports.

LGBTQ students' experiences at school with regard to safety and LGBTQ-related supports may vary depending on the characteristics of the school itself. Students in our survey were asked about their grade level, the type of school they attend, and the geographic location of their school. We examined potential differences in LGBTQ students' reports of hearing anti-LGBTQ language, experiences of anti-LGBTQ victimization and discrimination, and access to LGBTQ-related resources and supports by school level, school type, locale, and geographic region.³³²

Differences by School Level

We examined differences in the experiences of LGBTQ students in middle schools and high schools.³³³ Overall, we found that LGBTQ middle school students reported a more hostile school climate than LGBTQ high school students.

Biased language. LGBTQ students in middle school heard homophobic remarks, including “that’s so gay,” “no homo,” and other homophobic remarks, more frequently than LGBTQ students in high school. Middle school students, however, did not differ from high school students with regard to hearing gender-biased remarks, including negative remarks about gender expression and negative remarks about transgender people (see Table 3.2).³³⁴

Peer victimization. Middle school students also experienced higher levels of all types of anti-LGBTQ victimization, including victimization based on sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender (see Table 3.2).³³⁵

Anti-LGBTQ discrimination. Middle school students were more likely to experience anti-LGBTQ discriminatory school policies and practices than high school students (see Table 3.2).³³⁶

LGBTQ-related resources and supports. LGBTQ students in middle school were less likely to have access to LGBTQ-related resources and supports in school, as compared to those in high school (see Table 3.2).³³⁷ LGBTQ middle school students were less likely to report having both comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies and policies supportive of transgender and nonbinary students. Middle school students reported having fewer supportive educators, less supportive school administrations, and fewer visible signs of LGBTQ support in school, specifically Safe Space stickers/

“My school has both middle and high school students in the same building. The middle schoolers are much more intolerant of LGBTQ people. The high schoolers are much more supportive.”

posters. In addition, LGBTQ students in middle school were less likely than those in high school to report having LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, including LGBTQ-inclusive sex education, as well as other LGBTQ-inclusive curricular resources, such as website access, library resources, and textbooks/other assigned readings. It is important to note, regarding LGBTQ-inclusive sex education, that we asked students about whether they had ever received this type of instruction, and as such, high school students would have had more opportunity to receive this type of curriculum than middle school students because they have had more years of schooling. Nevertheless, it is important that LGBTQ students receive LGBTQ-inclusive sex education early on before they are faced with situations that may put them at risk for sexual health problems, especially because prior research has shown that LGBTQ youth are more likely to engage in sexual health risk behaviors than non-LGBTQ youth.³³⁸

Middle school students were also less likely to report that their school had a supportive student club, such as a GSA. However, among LGBTQ students who had a GSA in their school, those in middle school reported attending meetings more often.³³⁹ It may be that because GSAs are less common in middle schools, there is a stronger commitment and greater effort among LGBTQ students to sustain those GSAs that do exist. It may also be that LGBTQ students in middle school are more likely than those in high school to seek support at GSA meetings, given the comparatively more hostile school climate in middle school.

Overall, these findings are consistent with research on the general population which indicates that students in middle schools face more hostile climates than students in high schools.³⁴⁰ School districts should devote greater attention to implementing these LGBTQ-supportive resources in

Table 3.2 Percentages of Students Reporting Anti-LGBTQ Language, Experiences of LGBTQ-Related Victimization, Discriminatory Policies and Practices, and Availability of LGBTQ-Related School Resources and Supports, by School Level.*

	Middle School	High School
Anti-LGBTQ Language in School (Heard Often or Frequently)		
“Gay” Used in Negative Way (e.g., “that’s so gay”)	87.4%	73.4%
Other Homophobic Remarks	59.4%	54.4%
“No Homo”	77.8%	57.3%
Negative Remarks About Gender Expression	52.1%	53.2%
Negative Remarks About Transgender People	45.0%	43.8%
Experiences of LGBTQ-Related Victimization (Any Bullying/Harassment/Assault)		
Victimization Based on Sexual Orientation	80.7%	67.2%
Victimization Based on Gender Expression	64.6%	56.4%
Victimization Based on Gender	61.5%	54.4%
Discriminatory School Policies and Practices		
Any LGBTQ-Related Discrimination	68.9%	55.7%
School Resources and Supports		
GSAs		
Presence of GSA	34.3%	73.5%
Curricular Inclusion		
Positive LGBTQ Curricular Inclusion	15.7%	20.4%
Negative LGBTQ Curricular Inclusion	14.8%	16.5%
Positive LGBTQ Inclusion in Sex Education	7.4%	8.6%
Curricular Resources		
LGBTQ Website Access	45.9%	59.4%
LGBTQ Library Resources	44.3%	52.2%
LGBTQ Inclusion in Textbooks or Other Assigned Readings	11.3%	21.7%
Supportive Educators		
Many (11 or More Supportive Staff)	32.3%	46.8%
Supportive Administration (Somewhat or Very Supportive)	35.7%	45.0%
Safe Space Stickers/Posters	45.2%	70.8%
Inclusive and Supportive Policies		
Comprehensive Anti-Bullying/Harassment Policy	10.7%	14.8%
Transgender/Nonbinary Student Policy	7.2%	12.1%

*Note: The percentages shown in the table are raw percentages. Because demographic differences were controlled for in the analyses, the raw percentages may not reflect differences in the analyses.

middle schools and to addressing anti-LGBTQ bias in younger grades, before it becomes engrained in middle school students' behaviors and attitudes. With specific regard to school policies, given that comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies and supportive policies for transgender and nonbinary students are often mandated at the district level, one would not necessarily expect any differences by school level. It may be that younger students are less aware of protective policies at their schools, and as such, school districts may need to increase efforts to educate students at all school levels about their rights. It also might reflect that some districts are inconsistent in the implementation of policies among their schools, particularly middle schools, and in such cases, districts must ensure that all schools are following district policies about school climate.

Differences by School Type

We examined differences in the experiences of LGBTQ students in public schools, religious schools, and private non-religious schools. Overall, we found that LGBTQ students in private non-religious schools experienced the least hostile school climates.

Biased language. Overall, we found that LGBTQ students from public schools were most likely to hear LGBTQ-biased language at school, whereas LGBTQ students in private non-religious schools were least likely to hear this type of language (see Table 3.3).³⁴¹ Specifically, LGBTQ students in private non-religious schools heard all types of anti-LGBTQ remarks less frequently than public school students, and heard most types of anti-LGBTQ remarks less frequently than religious school students, with the exception of hearing “no homo” where there were no differences between private non-religious and religious school students. There were also differences between LGBTQ students in public schools and those in religious schools, although they were somewhat more nuanced. LGBTQ students in religious schools heard most types of homophobic remarks less frequently than those in public schools, with the exception of hearing “gay” used in a negative way where there were no differences. However, public school students heard negative remarks about gender expression less frequently than religious school students. There were no differences between public and religious school students on hearing negative remarks about transgender people.

Among public school students, we also examined anti-LGBTQ language between students in charter schools and those in regular public schools. However, for all types of anti-LGBTQ remarks, we did not observe any differences (see Table 3.3).³⁴²

Peer victimization. The frequency of anti-LGBTQ victimization also differed across school type (see Table 3.3).³⁴³ LGBTQ students in public schools generally experienced higher levels of anti-LGBTQ victimization than others. Specifically, public school students experienced higher levels of all types of anti-LGBTQ victimization than those in private non-religious schools, and higher levels of victimization based on gender than those in religious schools. However, public school and religious school students did not differ on victimization based on sexual orientation and based on gender expression. Private non-religious school students and religious school students did not differ on any type of anti-LGBTQ victimization. Furthermore, among public school students, there were no significant differences with regard to victimization between those in charter schools and those in regular public schools (see Table 3.3).³⁴⁴

Anti-LGBTQ discrimination. Students in private non-religious schools were the least likely to report experiencing anti-LGBTQ discriminatory school policies and practices, and students in religious schools were the most likely to experience anti-LGBTQ discrimination (see Table 3.3).³⁴⁵ Among public school students, there were no significant differences in experiences with discrimination between those in charter schools and those in regular public schools (see also Table 3.3).³⁴⁶

LGBTQ-related resources and supports. We examined differences by school type regarding LGBTQ students' access to LGBTQ-related school supports, including: GSAs, supportive staff, LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, other curricular resources, and inclusive and supportive school policies. Overall, students in religious schools were less likely to report having LGBTQ-related resources and supports in their schools, and students in private non-religious schools were more likely to report having these resources and supports (see Table 3.3).³⁴⁷ Furthermore, there were few differences in the availability of LGBTQ-related resources and supports among public school students between those in charter schools and those in regular public schools (see also Table 3.3).³⁴⁸

Table 3.3 Percentages of Students Reporting Anti-LGBTQ Language, Experiences of LGBTQ-Related Victimization, Discriminatory Policies and Practices, and Availability of LGBTQ-Related School Resources and Supports, by School Type.*

		Public**		Private	Religious
	All Public	Regular Public	Charter		
Anti-LGBTQ Language in School (Heard Often or Frequently)					
"Gay" Used in Negative Way (e.g., "that's so gay")	77.2%	77.3%	74.5%	54.5%	70.9%
Other Homophobic Remarks	56.5%	56.6%	55.6%	31.3%	46.8%
"No Homo"	61.7%	61.6%	64.2%	51.8%	54.1%
Negative Remarks About Gender Expression	53.4%	53.4%	53.3%	47.1%	60.7%
Negative Remarks About Transgender People	44.9%	44.9%	44.4%	29.0%	42.8%
Experiences of LGBTQ-Related Victimization (Any Bullying/ Harassment/Assault)					
Victimization Based on Sexual Orientation	70.9%	70.7%	75.1%	58.9%	68.1%
Victimization Based on Gender Expression	58.8%	58.6%	65.2%	51.6%	57.4%
Victimization Based on Gender	56.5%	56.3%	60.8%	51.4%	44.4%
Discriminatory School Policies and Practices					
Any LGBTQ-Related Discrimination	58.7%	58.5%	62.3%	51.2%	83.5%
School Resources and Supports					
GSAs					
Presence of GSA	63.9%	64.0%	61.2%	57.9%	14.9%
Curricular Inclusion					
Positive LGBTQ Curricular Inclusion	18.8%	18.4%	26.8%	32.9%	13.2%
Negative LGBTQ Curricular Inclusion	15.6%	15.5%	16.3%	13.1%	59.2%
Positive LGBTQ Inclusion in Sex Education	8.0%	7.9%	11.0%	14.2%	3.1%
Curricular Resources					
LGBTQ Website Access	56.1%	56.0%	57.1%	68.7%	42.3%
LGBTQ Library Resources	50.5%	50.8%	42.9%	43.1%	24.1%
LGBTQ Inclusion in Textbooks or Other Assigned Readings	18.9%	18.8%	21.8%	26.4%	27.0%
Supportive Educators					
Many (11 or More Supportive Staff)	42.8%	42.9%	40.5%	50.2%	17.2%
Supportive Administration (Somewhat or Very Supportive)	42.4%	42.2%	46.5%	55.9%	18.6%
Safe Space Stickers/Posters	64.4%	64.5%	62.6%	65.9%	19.5%
Inclusive and Supportive Policies					
Comprehensive Anti-Bullying/Harassment Policy	13.6%	13.6%	14.3%	16.9%	3.6%
Transgender/Nonbinary Student Policy	10.9%	10.7%	13.8%	17.3%	2.6%

*Note: The percentages shown in the table are raw percentages. Because demographic differences were controlled for in the analyses, the raw percentages may not reflect differences in the analyses.

**Analyses were conducted on all public schools. Within public schools, analyses were also conducted on regular (non-charter) and charter schools.

Students in private non-religious schools were most likely to have LGBTQ-related supportive school resources, with a few exceptions. We did not observe a difference between those in private non-religious schools and those in religious schools regarding access to LGBTQ-related textbooks and other assigned reading materials. Further, we did not observe a difference between those in private non-religious and those in public schools regarding visible displays of support (i.e., Safe Space stickers/posters), and private non-religious school students were actually less likely than those in public schools to have GSAs and LGBTQ-related library resources.

In contrast to private non-religious schools, students in religious schools were least likely to report having most supportive school resources we examined, including: GSAs, LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, access to LGBTQ-related websites, LGBTQ-related library resources, indicators of supportive school personnel (i.e., supportive educators, supportive school administration, Safe Space stickers/posters), comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies, and policies supportive of transgender and nonbinary students. Furthermore, religious school students were most likely to report *negative* representations of LGBTQ people and topics in their curriculum (see Table 3.3).³⁴⁹ However, we also found that LGBTQ students in religious schools were more likely to have LGBTQ-related information in textbooks or other assigned readings than public school students, and as previously mentioned, were not different from private non-religious school students in their access to these types of resources.

It is perhaps surprising that LGBTQ students in our sample from religious schools reported more LGBTQ content in their textbooks or other assigned readings than public school students. However, students in the survey were asked about any LGBTQ inclusion in textbooks and assigned readings, regardless of its nature. Considering the finding that religious school students were more likely than others to report being taught negative LGBTQ content, it is possible that the LGBTQ topics included in students' textbooks and assigned readings are often included in a negative manner.

Within public schools, students in charter schools and students in regular public schools did not differ regarding access to most LGBTQ resources and supports. However, students in charter schools were more likely than those in regular public schools

to report having LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, including LGBTQ-inclusive sex education, as well as supportive transgender and nonbinary student policies. Charter school students also reported having more supportive administrations. However, students in charter schools were less likely to have access to LGBTQ-related library resources than those in regular public schools.

In general, we found that private non-religious schools were more positive environments for LGBTQ youth than public or religious schools, as private non-religious school students were least likely to hear anti-LGBTQ remarks, least likely to experience anti-LGBTQ victimization or discrimination, and were most likely to have LGBTQ-related school resources and supports. The differences between LGBTQ student experiences in religious schools and those in public schools, however, are more nuanced. Students in religious schools were less likely than those in public schools to hear homophobic remarks and to experience victimization based on gender, but they were more likely to hear negative remarks about gender expression, more likely to experience LGBTQ-related discrimination at school, and less likely to have LGBTQ resources and supports.

The results regarding gender-based bias, in particular, indicate a somewhat complex pattern. Compared to students in public schools, those in religious schools experienced less gender-based victimization and similar rates of victimization based on gender expression. However, students in religious schools were more likely to hear negative comments about gender expression. In part, this pattern may come from a culture in religious schools that is often more gendered than in public schools. For example, students in religious schools were more likely than those in public schools to report that they attended a single-sex school (17.0% vs 0.2%),³⁵⁰ and students in religious schools were also more likely to report school practices that separated students by gender or held them to different standards based on gender, such as gendered dress codes or uniforms.³⁵¹ Thus, the gender of LGBTQ students' peers in religious schools may be more homogenous, whereas gender expression would still vary among students. As such, one might expect less victimization based on gender, but one might not necessarily expect less victimization based on gender expression, as we saw in our findings. Furthermore, students in religious schools were less likely than those in

public schools to report that school staff intervened on negative remarks about gender expression,³⁵² which may reflect more traditional attitudes and values in religious schools about gender roles.

In addition to the gendered culture and practices in many religious schools, it is also important to note that all private schools, both religious and non-religious, can select who attends their school and can more easily expel students than public schools, which could result in comparatively lower rates of harassment that LGBTQ students experience in private non-religious schools. However, the policies and practices of some religious schools may reflect a more negative, anti-LGBTQ attitude of their specific religious doctrine or beliefs, which in turn, may result in greater LGBTQ-related discrimination and fewer supports.

Despite the differences we found between public, religious, and private non-religious schools, we found that LGBTQ students in all three school types commonly reported experiences of anti-LGBTQ remarks, victimization, and discrimination. For all types of schools, more effort needs to be made to provide positive school environments for LGBTQ youth. With specific regard to religious schools, greater efforts toward providing more inclusive curricular resources and policies for LGBTQ students are specifically warranted. In addition, given that little is known about the expulsion of LGBTQ students in private schools, further research is needed to better understand how these and other school disciplinary actions might affect school climate for LGBTQ students. Furthermore, there is a need for action in all types of schools to combat policies that create a hostile climate for LGBTQ students.

Among students in public schools, specifically, those in charter schools were generally similar to those in regular public schools with regard to anti-LGBTQ experiences. With regard to LGBTQ-related resources and supports, however, students in charter schools were more likely to have inclusive curricular materials, supportive transgender and nonbinary policies, and a supportive administration. With regard to curricular inclusion in particular, it may be that charter schools provide more curricular flexibility for teachers than regular public schools. In contrast, charter schools were less likely to have LGBTQ-related library resources than regular public schools, although this may be related to charter schools having fewer library

“I go to a Catholic school... My school also was begged by LGBT students to create a support group of LGBT or some of the sort. Students asked for literally 4 years, and they told them straight up NO.”

resources in general than regular public schools.³⁵³ More research is needed to understand these differences in resources and supports between charter schools and regular public schools. With increased attention paid to charter schools in recent years, it is also important that future research further examines the experiences of LGBTQ students in these schools. As charter schools may vary widely in their missions, ideals, and practices, further exploration into how various types of charter schools address LGBTQ student issues would be particularly valuable.

Differences by Locale

We examined differences in the experiences of LGBTQ students in urban, suburban, and rural schools. Overall, we found that LGBTQ students in rural schools experienced the most hostile school climates.

Biased language. LGBTQ students in rural schools reported hearing most types of anti-LGBTQ remarks more frequently than those in other locales, and there were few differences between students in urban and those in suburban schools.³⁵⁴ The one exception was the phrase “no homo” — students in urban schools reported hearing this more frequently than those in suburban schools, but did not differ from students in rural schools (see Table 3.4).

Peer victimization. LGBTQ students in suburban schools experienced less anti-LGBTQ victimization compared to students in other locales.³⁵⁵ LGBTQ students in urban schools were less likely to experience victimization based on sexual orientation than LGBTQ students in rural schools, but students in the two regions did not differ in victimization based on gender expression and victimization based on gender (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4 Percentages of Students Reporting Anti-LGBTQ Language, Experiences of LGBTQ-Related Victimization, Discriminatory Policies and Practices, and Availability of LGBTQ-Related School Resources and Supports, by Locale.*

	Urban	Suburban	Rural/ Small Town
Anti-LGBTQ Language in School (Heard Often or Frequently)			
“Gay” Used in Negative Way (e.g., “that’s so gay”)	71.6%	73.3%	81.7%
Other Homophobic Remarks	51.3%	50.0%	63.5%
“No Homo”	62.9%	59.1%	61.8%
Negative Remarks About Gender Expression	52.8%	51.1%	56.8%
Negative Remarks About Transgender People	40.1%	40.7%	51.0%
Experiences of LGBTQ-Related Victimization (Any Bullying/Harassment/Assault)			
Victimization Based on Sexual Orientation	68.8%	66.1%	76.4%
Victimization Based on Gender Expression	59.8%	54.6%	62.7%
Victimization Based on Gender	57.5%	52.5%	59.2%
Discriminatory Policies and Practices			
Any LGBTQ-Related Discrimination	57.7%	55.1%	66.1%
School Resources and Supports			
GSAs			
Presence of GSA	65.6%	71.6%	44.3%
Curricular Inclusion			
Positive LGBTQ Curricular Inclusion	23.9%	21.0%	13.9%
Negative LGBTQ Curricular Inclusion	16.5%	15.5%	19.4%
Positive LGBTQ Inclusion in Sex Education	11.0%	8.5%	5.6%
Curricular Resources			
LGBTQ Website Access	57.1%	59.5%	51.6%
LGBTQ Library Resources	46.3%	52.3%	46.5%
LGBTQ Inclusion in Textbooks or Other Assigned Readings	21.3%	21.8%	15.2%
Supportive Educators			
Many (11 or More Supportive Staff)	46.5%	49.8%	28.3%
Supportive Administration (Somewhat or Very Supportive)	46.6%	46.4%	33.5%
Safe Space Stickers/Posters	67.7%	70.6%	47.9%
Inclusive and Supportive Policies			
Comprehensive Anti-Bullying/Harassment Policy	14.4%	15.4%	10.1%
Transgender/Nonbinary Student Policy	14.1%	11.4%	7.9%

*Note: The percentages shown in the table are raw percentages. Because demographic differences were controlled for in the analyses, the raw percentages may not reflect differences in the analyses.

Anti-LGBTQ discrimination. LGBTQ students in rural schools were more likely to experience anti-LGBTQ discrimination than those in other locales. There were no differences in experiences of this kind of discrimination between students in urban schools and students in suburban schools (see Table 3.4).³⁵⁶

LGBTQ-related resources and supports. Overall, LGBTQ students in rural schools were least likely to report having LGBTQ-related resources and supports in their schools (see Table 3.4).³⁵⁷ Specifically, students from rural schools had less access to all LGBTQ-related resources and supports than students in suburban schools. Students in rural schools also had less access to most LGBTQ-related resources and supports than students in urban schools, except they did not differ on the availability of LGBTQ-related library resources.

The pattern of differences between students in urban and suburban schools in regard to school resources was somewhat mixed. Students in urban schools were more likely to have LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, LGBTQ-inclusive sex education, and supportive transgender and nonbinary student policies than students in suburban schools. However, students in urban schools were less likely to have GSAs, supportive educators, Safe Space stickers/posters, LGBTQ-related website access, and LGBTQ-related library resources than students in suburban schools. Certain resources, such as an educator who shows support of LGBTQ students or displays of a Safe Space sticker/poster, or a librarian who selects LGBTQ-related content to be included in the school library, may more likely be a result of individual-level actions taken by educators and staff. In contrast, other resources, such as positive curricular inclusion or LGBTQ-supportive policies, may more likely be a result of district-level stipulations by school board or district leadership. With regard to resources driven by individual-level actions, differences between urban and suburban schools may be caused by inequities in funding and resources. Urban schools often have fewer financial resources relative to the size of the student population than suburban schools,³⁵⁸ and thus, educators in urban schools may have less access to training and supports that facilitate LGBTQ-inclusion. With regard to resources driven by institutional action, such as curriculum and policy, differences between urban and suburban schools may be related to differences in social and political attitudes of

the local communities. There tends to be greater community acceptance of LGBTQ people in urban areas than in suburban areas.³⁵⁹ As such, there may be a greater willingness, or less resistance, on the part of district administrations or school boards in urban areas to provide institutional LGBTQ-related resources and supports in the schools. However, more research is warranted to understand why LGBTQ students in suburban schools have greater access to the other types of resources and supports.

Overall, our findings indicate that schools in rural areas were the most unsafe and were least likely to have LGBTQ-related school resources and supports. Although schools in suburban areas appeared to be safest for LGBTQ students, they sometimes lagged behind urban schools with regard to certain resources and supports. More research is needed to examine the relationship between school supports and their effect on school climate for LGBTQ students, particularly while taking into account differences by locale. Nevertheless, given the positive impact of LGBTQ-related school resources and supports, specific efforts should be made to increase these resources in all schools, particularly in rural schools where there may be the greatest need.

Differences by Region

We examined differences in experiences of LGBTQ students in the South, Midwest, West, and Northeast. In general, LGBTQ students from the South and Midwest reported a more hostile school climate than students from the West and Northeast.

Biased language. Overall, LGBTQ students from the South and Midwest were more likely to hear anti-LGBTQ language than students in the Northeast and West (see Table 3.5).³⁶⁰ For all types of anti-LGBTQ remarks, except for the phrase, “no homo,” students in the South reported the highest rates relative to all other regions, students in the Midwest reported higher rates than students in the Northeast and West, and students in the Northeast and West did not differ. For the expression “no homo,” students in the Northeast were the least likely to hear the phrase “no homo” in school, compared to all other regions. Further, students in the Midwest were less likely to hear “no homo” in school than those in the South and those in the West. However, we did not find that those in

Table 3.5 Percentages of Students Reporting Anti-LGBTQ Language, Experiences of LGBTQ-Related Victimization, Discriminatory Policies and Practices, and Availability of LGBTQ-Related School Resources and Supports, by Region.*

	South	Midwest	West	Northeast
Anti-LGBTQ Language in School (Heard Often or Frequently)				
“Gay” Used in Negative Way (e.g., “that’s so gay”)	81.4%	75.7%	72.6%	70.8%
Other Homophobic Remarks	60.7%	55.3%	48.4%	51.0%
“No Homo”	65.8%	59.5%	64.0%	52.6%
Negative Remarks About Gender Expression	57.6%	53.5%	50.4%	49.5%
Negative Remarks About Transgender People	48.7%	46.5%	39.4%	39.1%
Experiences of LGBTQ-Related Victimization (Any Bullying/Harassment/Assault)				
Victimization Based on Sexual Orientation	74.4%	71.4%	67.1%	65.3%
Victimization Based on Gender Expression	60.8%	59.5%	57.2%	54.7%
Victimization Based on Gender	56.6%	56.6%	56.6%	52.9%
Discriminatory Policies and Practices				
Any LGBTQ-Related Discrimination	68.1%	61.6%	54.0%	49.2%
School Resources and Supports				
GSAs				
Presence of GSA	46.8%	60.7%	71.6%	73.8%
Curricular Inclusion				
Positive LGBTQ Curricular Inclusion	12.2%	17.8%	25.4%	25.2%
Negative LGBTQ Curricular Inclusion	19.9%	17.7%	16.2%	12.8%
Positive LGBTQ Inclusion in Sex Education	2.3%	5.9%	13.7%	13.3%
Curricular Resources				
LGBTQ Website Access	47.0%	59.5%	56.9%	65.8%
LGBTQ Library Resources	43.5%	51.0%	48.3%	55.8%
LGBTQ Inclusion in Textbooks or Other Assigned Readings	16.7%	19.5%	21.5%	22.1%
Supportive Educators				
Many (11 or More Supportive Staff)	30.7%	40.8%	47.0%	55.9%
Supportive Administration (Somewhat or Very Supportive)	29.0%	41.6%	49.2%	55.0%
Safe Space Stickers/Posters	45.5%	62.1%	73.0%	77.7%
Inclusive and Supportive Policies				
Comprehensive Anti-Bullying/Harassment Policy	6.3%	10.6%	18.3%	21.6%
Transgender/Nonbinary Student Policy	4.6%	9.6%	15.0%	17.1%

*Note: The percentages shown in the table are raw percentages. Because demographic differences were controlled for in the analyses, the raw percentages may not reflect differences in the analyses.

“I live in a fairly rural area, so it is a lot of old fashioned people there...So I did get called some names and a couple of shoves in the hall, but nothing that bad. Teachers could see these things, but they never do anything. Even the teachers I was closest to didn’t care. Getting involved in a matter like that would very much so hurt their reputation with other students.”

the South and those in the West differed in the frequency of hearing this type of remark.

Peer victimization. Overall, LGBTQ students from the Northeast reported the lowest levels of anti-LGBTQ victimization, compared to students from all other regions (see Table 3.5).³⁶¹ In contrast, LGBTQ students from the South generally experienced higher levels of anti-LGBTQ victimization than students from all other regions. Specifically, students from the South experienced higher levels of victimization based on sexual orientation than those in all other regions. Students in the South also experienced higher levels of victimization based on gender expression and based on gender than those in the Northeast, but did not differ from students in the Midwest or the West. Students in the Midwest experienced higher levels of all forms of anti-LGBTQ victimization than students in the Northeast, but they did not differ from students in the West. Lastly, students in the West experienced higher levels of victimization based on gender expression and based on gender than students in the Northeast, but they did not differ regarding victimization based on sexual orientation.

Anti-LGBTQ discrimination. Students from the Northeast were least likely to experience anti-LGBTQ discriminatory school policies and practices, followed by students from the West, and then students from the Midwest (see Table 3.5).³⁶² Students from the South were the most likely to experience anti-LGBTQ discriminatory school policies and practices, compared to all other regions.

LGBTQ-related resources and supports. Students from the Northeast were, for the most part, more likely to report having access to LGBTQ-related school resources and supports than all other regions, and students from the South were the

least likely to report having access to resources and supports than all other regions (see Table 3.5).³⁶³

Students in the Northeast were more likely than those in the Midwest to have access to all resources and supports that we examined. Students in the Northeast also were more likely than those in the West to report having supportive school personnel, LGBTQ website access, LGBTQ library resources, and comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies, but they did not differ regarding curricular inclusion, GSAs, LGBTQ-related textbooks/other assigned readings, and supportive transgender and nonbinary policies. Students in the West were more likely to report having GSAs, curricular inclusion, supportive school personnel, and school policies than students in the Midwest, but did not differ regarding LGBTQ website access, LGBTQ library resources, and LGBTQ-related textbooks/other assigned readings.

Overall, LGBTQ students in the South and Midwest faced more negative school climates and less access to LGBTQ-related resources and supports, compared to those in the Northeast and West. These regional findings highlight that much more needs to be done to ensure that LGBTQ students are safe no matter where they attend school, and that education leaders and safe school advocates must pay particular attention to schools in regions where LGBTQ students experience a more hostile school climate. Given that attitudes about LGBTQ people are less positive in the South and Midwest,³⁶⁴ further inquiry is needed on how best to implement LGBTQ resources and supports in schools in more conservative regions, in spite of cultural and political beliefs towards the LGBTQ community. Furthermore, national efforts regarding bullying prevention and positive school climate must not only take into account the overall experiences of LGBTQ students, but they must also

acknowledge and respond to regional differences regarding anti-LGBTQ victimization and access to LGBTQ student supports.

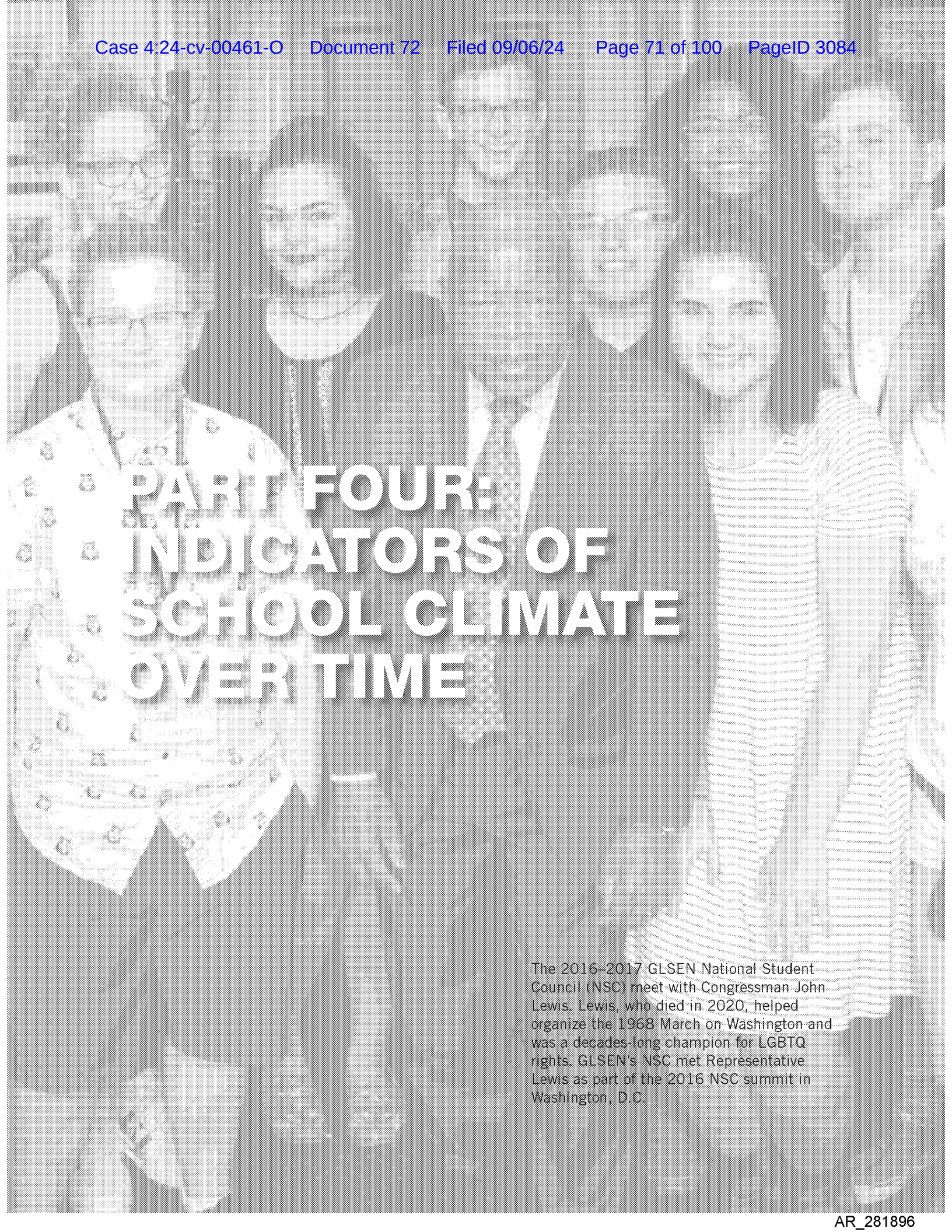
Conclusions

Overall, schools nationwide are not safe learning environments for LGBTQ students and are lacking in LGBTQ resources and supports, and they differ by school and geographical characteristics. By and large, the majority of LGBTQ students in middle schools, from schools in rural areas, and from schools in the South and Midwest experience more hostile school climate, and have less access to LGBTQ-related resources and supports.

With regard to school type, the picture of school climate for LGBTQ students is more complex. It is evident from our findings that private non-religious schools were safer and had more supportive resources for LGBTQ students than religious and public schools. However, the differences between religious and public schools were more nuanced. LGBTQ students in religious schools were less likely to hear homophobic remarks and experienced less victimization based on gender than those in public schools, but were more likely to hear gender-biased remarks. Furthermore, students in public schools had more positive LGBTQ supports and resources and were less likely to experience anti-LGBTQ discrimination. Thus, as discussed in the section above, religious schools may be physically safer but not supportive or equitable environments.

In the recent 2020 Supreme Court ruling *Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia* and two other consolidated cases,³⁶⁵ the determination was that discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity is a violation of Title VII's prohibition on employment discrimination based on sex. However, there is no federal legislation that has *explicitly* established protections from discrimination in schools based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and additional fixes must be added to federal law. Further, private religious schools can be exempt from Title IX protections while public schools are not eligible for the same exemption, which allows religious schools the opportunity to discriminate against LGBTQ students without the same legal ramifications as public schools.³⁶⁶ Given the lack of consistent enforcement of federal protections from anti-LGBTQ discrimination for LGBTQ students, along with our findings regarding LGBTQ youth in religious schools, it is evident that focused efforts must be made to provide positive school environments for LGBTQ youth in these schools.

Efforts should be made to ensure that schools are safe and welcoming for all students across these school characteristics, while paying particular attention to school characteristics with the most hostile school climate. Furthermore, efforts should be made to ensure that LGBTQ students are provided with access to LGBTQ-related resources and supports, with particular attention to the types of schools that are least likely to have such resources and supports.



PART FOUR: INDICATORS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE OVER TIME

The 2016–2017 GLSEN National Student Council (NSC) meet with Congressman John Lewis. Lewis, who died in 2020, helped organize the 1968 March on Washington and was a decades-long champion for LGBTQ rights. GLSEN's NSC met Representative Lewis as part of the 2016 NSC summit in Washington, D.C.

Indicators of School Climate Over Time

Key Findings

- From 2001 to 2015, there had been a general downward trend in students' frequency of hearing homophobic remarks at school. In 2019, the frequency of hearing homophobic remarks like "fag" or "dyke" was lower than all prior years, and these remarks did not differ between 2015 and 2017. However, there has been a sizeable increase in frequency of hearing "no homo" at school in 2019, after a consistent pattern of decline between 2011 and 2017.
- There had been a decrease in hearing negative remarks about someone's gender expression from 2017 to 2019. There was also a decrease of negative remarks about transgender people between 2017 and 2019, after a steady increase between 2013 and 2017.
- With regard to remarks from school staff, after seeing a steady decline in students' frequency of hearing homophobic remarks from school staff from 2007 to 2013, and no change from 2013 to 2017, we saw a decrease from staff on homophobic remarks once again in 2019. Furthermore, we saw an increase in frequency from 2013 to 2017 in hearing school staff making negative remarks about gender expression, but these remarks decreased in 2019 to levels that are similar to our findings from 2015.
- Students' frequency of experiencing verbal harassment based on sexual orientation did not change from 2015 to 2019, but frequency of victimization based on gender expression resumed a pattern of decline in 2019, following an increase between 2015 and 2017.
- Frequency of experiencing physical harassment based on sexual orientation resumed a pattern of decline in 2019 after no change occurred in 2017, and frequency of physical assault based on sexual orientation resumed a pattern of decline in 2019 after no change occurred in 2015 and 2017. For physical harassment and assault based on gender expression, there continued to be a pattern of modest decline, and was lower in 2019 than all prior years.
- LGBTQ students' reporting of incidents or harassment to school staff in 2019 was similar to 2017, and greater than nearly all other years. However, students' reports on the effectiveness of staff's responses to these incidents in 2019 has remained similar from 2013 to 2017, and is somewhat lower than prior years.
- Overall, LGBTQ students were less likely to experience discrimination in 2019 than in 2013 and 2017. For certain gender-specific forms of discrimination, including being prevented from using facilities aligned with one's gender and being prevented from using chosen name/pronouns, incidence was greatest in 2017. However, incidence for most types of discrimination was lower in 2019 than in previous years.
- In 2017, there were few changes in presence of several LGBTQ-related resources and supports in school. However, in 2019, we have seen promising increases in many LGBTQ supports in school. LGBTQ students were more likely to report having a GSA, supportive school personnel, access to LGBTQ information from school libraries and school computers, and comprehensive anti-bullying and harassment policies.
- LGBTQ students' reports of peer acceptance of LGBTQ people had steadily increased from 2011 to 2015, but has largely leveled off since that time.

GLSEN strives to make schools safe for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, race or ethnicity, or any other characteristic that may be the basis for harassment. In 1999, there was very little research on the experiences of LGBTQ students and their experiences in schools, and as such, GLSEN sought to fill this knowledge gap by conducting its first National School Climate Survey (NSCS). Since that time, for 20 years, the National School Climate Survey has been conducted biennially and is the only study that has continually assessed the school experiences of LGBTQ students in the U.S. Thus, it is vital that we use our data to examine changes over time in the education landscape for this population.

In this section, we examine whether there have been changes from 1999 to the present 2019 survey with regard to indicators of school climate for LGBTQ students. Across the years, the survey has been slightly modified with each installment to reflect new or emerging concerns about school climate for LGBTQ students, but its content has remained largely the same and has used virtually the same data collection methods since 2001. The 1999 survey differed slightly from all subsequent surveys in the comprehensiveness of the survey questions and in the methods. Nevertheless, there were two questions — frequency of homophobic remarks and frequency of harassment — that were equivalent to all subsequent surveys, and the 1999 data was included for comparison in the analyses of those two variables.

We examine differences across years in indicators of a hostile school climate, such as hearing homophobic remarks, experiences of harassment and assault, and experiences of discriminatory school policies and practices. We also examine the availability of positive resources for LGBTQ students in their schools such as supportive educators, student-led clubs such as GSAs (Gay-Straight Alliances or Gender and Sexuality Alliances), inclusive curricular resources, and comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies. In addition, we examine whether there have been changes over time in students' acceptance of LGBTQ people.

Anti-LGBTQ Remarks Over Time

Language perpetually evolves, and so is the case with anti-LGBTQ remarks since we began conducting the NSCS. To keep current with changes in usage, we have modified how we ask

“This was the most inclusive year at my school so far, but there is a tremendous amount of work to be done.”

LGBTQ students about anti-LGBTQ remarks. In 1999, because the expression “that’s so gay” was perhaps not as commonly used, we only assessed the frequency of hearing homophobic epithets, such as “fag” or “dyke.” In 2001, we assessed the frequency of hearing homophobic remarks, remarks like “fag” or “dyke,” but also expressions using “gay” to mean something bad or valueless. In 2003, we began asking questions about hearing negative remarks about gender expression, such as someone acting not “feminine enough” or “masculine enough.” In 2009, we began assessing the expression “no homo,” and in 2013 we asked about negative expressions about transgender people, such as “tranny” or “he/she.”

Our results indicated that although there had been a general trend that homophobic remarks were on the decline from 2001 to 2015, the frequency of these remarks remained consistent from 2015 to 2017. However, in 2019, we found that the downward trend in the frequency of remarks continued, with LGBTQ students reporting a lower frequency of homophobic remarks than all prior years.³⁶⁷ As shown in Figure 4.1, a little more than half reported hearing homophobic remarks frequently in 2019, compared to three-quarters of students in 2009 and more than 90% in 1999. Use of expressions such as “that’s so gay” has remained the most common form of biased language heard by LGBTQ students in school, and had been in consistent decline until 2015, but has been increasing from 2015 to 2019, as also shown in Figure 4.1.³⁶⁸ Hearing the expression “no homo” had consistently been less common than most other types of LGBTQ-related biased remarks, and the frequency had been on a decline from 2011 to 2017. However, in 2019, we saw a sizeable increase from 2017.³⁶⁹ From open-ended responses from the LGBTQ students in our survey, several mentioned that “no homo” was in common use in their schools, in ways similar to how “that’s so gay” has been used. For example, one student wrote:

“Many people use gay in an insulting way and no homo,” and another wrote: “People deny they

are homophobic but then use negative terms like no homo or that's gay." However, there were other students who commented that the use of the phrase was used more commonly among LGBTQ students in an ironic or humorous way. For example, another student commented: "In school the use of 'No Homo' is said amongst me and my friends as a joke, those of us who identify as LGBT see it as a joke only and not a derogatory term," and another commented: "All of us including me use the term no homo as a meme or a joke...." Both types of use for the expression "no homo," as a homophobic or a reclaimed joke among LGBTQ friends, might explain the recent steep increase in use of the phrase in schools.

With regard to hearing negative remarks about gender expression, we had seen few changes

across years between 2003, when we first included these items, and 2011. From 2011 to 2013, we saw a decrease in frequency but then an increase from 2013 to 2015, with no subsequent change from 2015 to 2017. However, we saw a decrease in frequency from 2017 to 2019 (see Figure 4.1).³⁷⁰ With regard to negative remarks about transgender people, we saw a steady incline in the rate of negative remarks about transgender people in schools from 2013, when we first asked this question, to 2017, but a decrease from 2017 to 2019.³⁷¹

Figure 4.2 illustrates the preponderance of students who reportedly use anti-LGBTQ language in school. The percentage of students who reported that homophobic remarks were used pervasively by the student body had been on a decline since the

Figure 4.1 Anti-LGBTQ Language by Students Over Time
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Hearing Language Frequently and Often Based on Estimated Marginal Means)

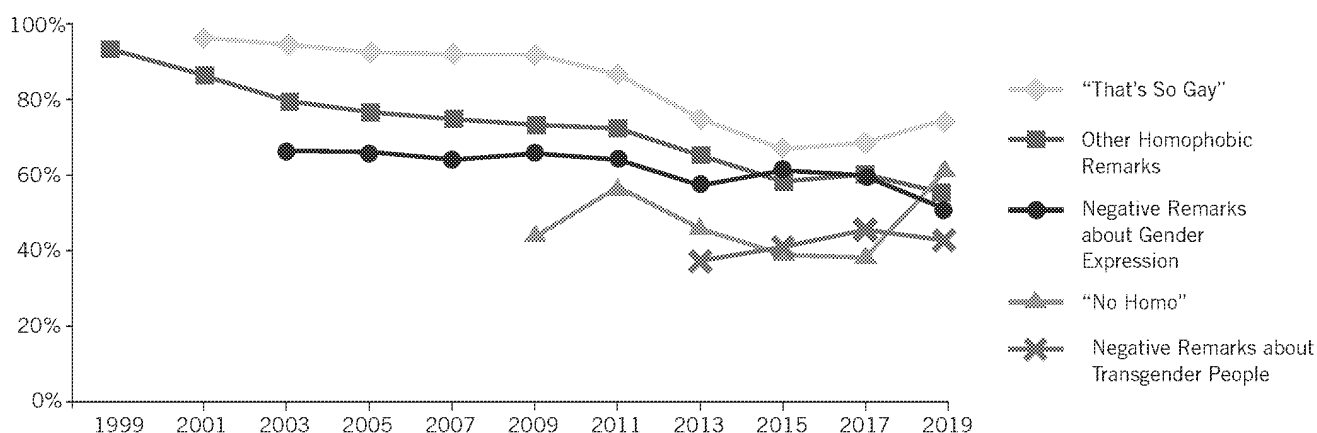
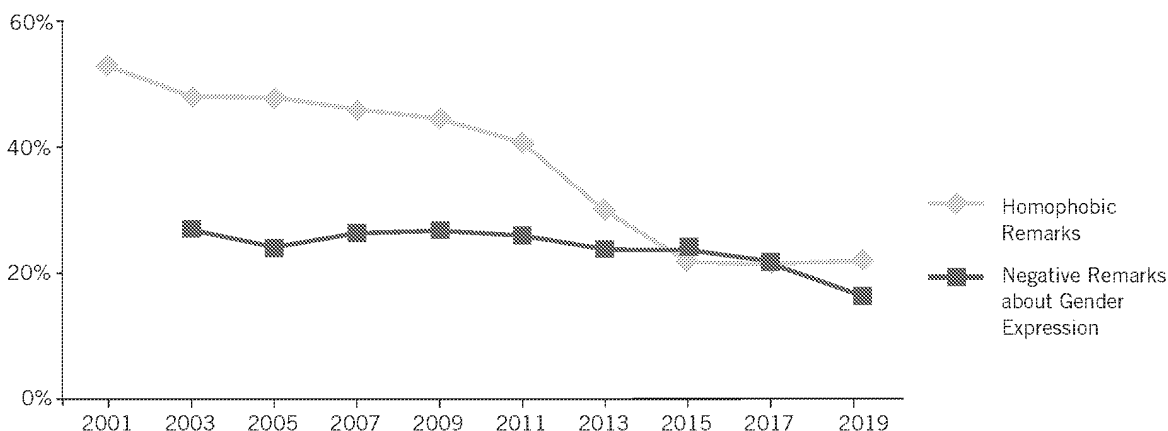


Figure 4.2 Preponderance of Students Using Anti-LGBT Language Over Time
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting that Most of Students Make Remarks, Based on Estimated Marginal Means)



2001 survey through 2015, but there have been no meaningful differences between 2015 and 2019.³⁷² As also shown in Figure 4.2, the preponderance of students reportedly making negative remarks about gender expression at school has remained low, relative to homophobic remarks. However, the preponderance of students had largely not changed from 2003 to 2015, but decreased slightly from 2015 to 2017 and again from 2017 to 2019. The preponderance of students making negative remarks about gender expression was lower in 2019 than all years prior.³⁷³

As shown in Figure 4.3, since 2001, the majority of students have reported that they have heard anti-LGBTQ remarks from teachers or other staff in their school. We had seen a steady decline in the frequency of staff making homophobic remarks from 2007 to 2013, but no change from 2013 to 2017. However, from 2017 to 2019, we saw a significant decrease in the frequency of school staff making homophobic remarks.³⁷⁴ With regard to hearing negative remarks about gender expression from school staff, there had been a small, downward trend in frequency between 2003 and 2013, yet an upward trend from 2013 to 2017. However, the frequency of gender biased remarks by school staff in 2019 was lower than 2017, and unchanged from 2015 (see also Figure 4.3).

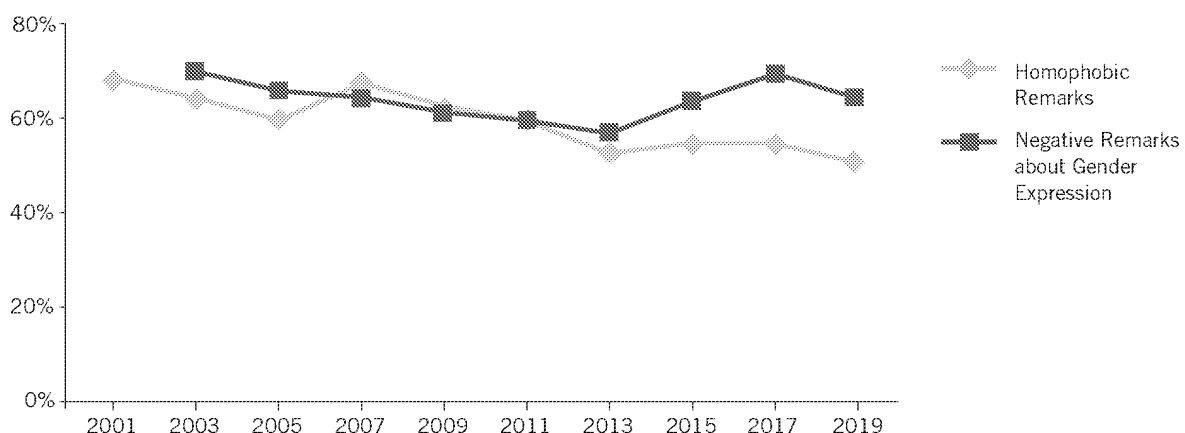
In our 2001 survey, we began asking students how frequently people in their school intervened when hearing homophobic remarks. As shown in Figure 4.4, the levels of intervention by staff were relatively similar across years between 2001 and 2013, but declined from 2013 to 2015

and remained at a similar lower level from 2015 to 2019. With regard to intervention by other students, there has largely been a steady decrease through 2013. The rate of intervention increased from 2013 to 2015, but has decreased since that time. The rate of student intervention in 2019 was significantly lower than all prior years.³⁷⁵

Regarding staff intervention with regard to negative remarks about gender expression, there was little change from 2003 to 2011 (see Figure 4.5). There was a small decrease in staff intervention from 2011 to 2013, and has largely remained at a similar rate in subsequent years. The rates of staff intervention beginning in 2013 were lower than prior years. In 2019, specifically, the rate of staff intervention was only greater than 2015. With regard to intervention by other students, we have seen an upward trend in rates of intervention after 2013, although the rate in 2019 was somewhat lower than in 2017 (see also Figure 4.5).³⁷⁶

Taking into account all the results related to anti-LGBTQ remarks in schools, we see a complex picture of how anti-LGBTQ remarks are contributing to a negative school climate for LGBTQ students. Certain types of homophobic remarks, like “fag” or “dyke,” and negative remarks about gender expression show a decline in 2019, after no change in 2017. Further, negative transgender remarks have decreased from 2017 to 2019. However, our findings about remarks such as “that’s so gay” and “no homo” evidence a concerning upward trend in frequency, and the expression “no homo” shows a startling incline after years of low and declining use. With regard

Figure 4.3 Anti-LGBT Language by School Staff Over Time
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting Ever Hearing Remarks, Based on Estimated Marginal Means)



to hearing biased remarks from school personnel, we see a continued declining trend regarding homophobic remarks, and the frequency was lower in 2019 than all prior years. With hearing gender-biased remarks from school personnel, although there was a significant decrease from 2017 to 2019, the frequency in 2019 was still higher than most years prior. Regarding intervention when hearing anti-LGBTQ remarks in school, by staff or other students, we see little positive change in recent years. In fact, student intervention when hearing homophobic remarks has continued to decline since 2015. It is important to note that in these analyses regarding intervention, we took into account the frequency of remarks heard. Thus, the diminished rate of response is not related to decreases in these remarks occurring in schools.

Anti-LGBTQ remarks in school may be increasingly left unaddressed, even though many of these remarks have become less commonly heard at school.

Experiences of Harassment and Assault Over Time

To gain further understanding of changes in school climate for LGBTQ students in secondary schools, we examined the incidence of reported anti-LGBTQ harassment and assault over time. Beginning with our first survey in 1999, we have assessed the frequency of experiencing verbal and physical harassment and physical assault based on sexual orientation in school. As shown in Figure 4.6, we saw few changes between 1999 and 2007 and

Figure 4.4 Intervention Regarding Homophobic Remarks Over Time
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting Any Intervention, Based on Estimated Marginal Means)

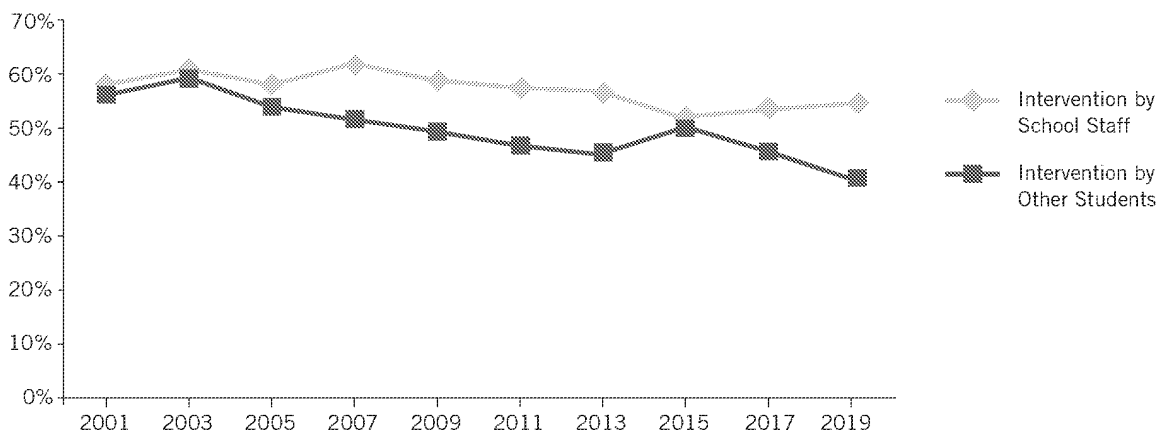
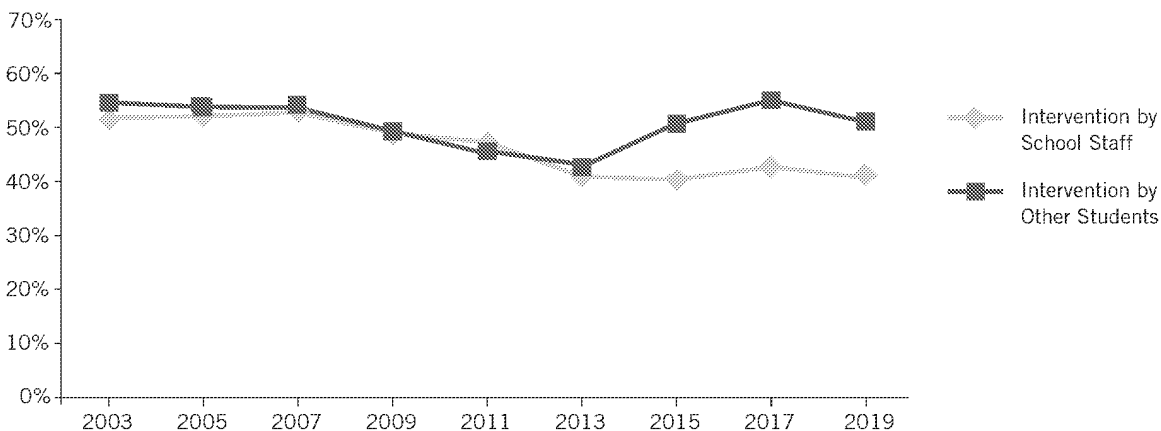


Figure 4.5 Intervention Regarding Negative Remarks about Gender Expression Over Time
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting Any Intervention, Based on Estimated Marginal Means)



a significant decline in verbal harassment based on sexual orientation from 2007 to 2015, yet no change between 2015 and 2019. With regard to physical harassment and assault, however, we generally saw increases in the frequency of these types of victimization from 1999 to 2007, and decreases starting in 2009 to 2015. In 2019, there was a small but significant decrease in the frequency of physical harassment from 2015 and 2017, and also a small but significant decrease in the frequency of physical assault from 2017.³⁷⁷

In 2001, we began including questions in the National School Climate Survey about harassment

and assault related to gender expression, as well as other personal characteristics. As shown in Figure 4.7, there had been a notable decrease in verbal harassment based on gender expression from 2001 to 2015, but an increase from 2015 to 2017. In 2019, we saw a decrease in this form of verbal harassment from 2017, but was not different than 2015. With regard to physical harassment and assault based on gender expression, we mostly saw a small decline from 2007 to 2019. In general, physical harassment and assault based on gender expression were generally lower in 2019 than all prior years.³⁷⁸

Figure 4.6 Frequency of Victimization Based on Sexual Orientation Over Time
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting Event Frequently, Based on Estimated Marginal Means)

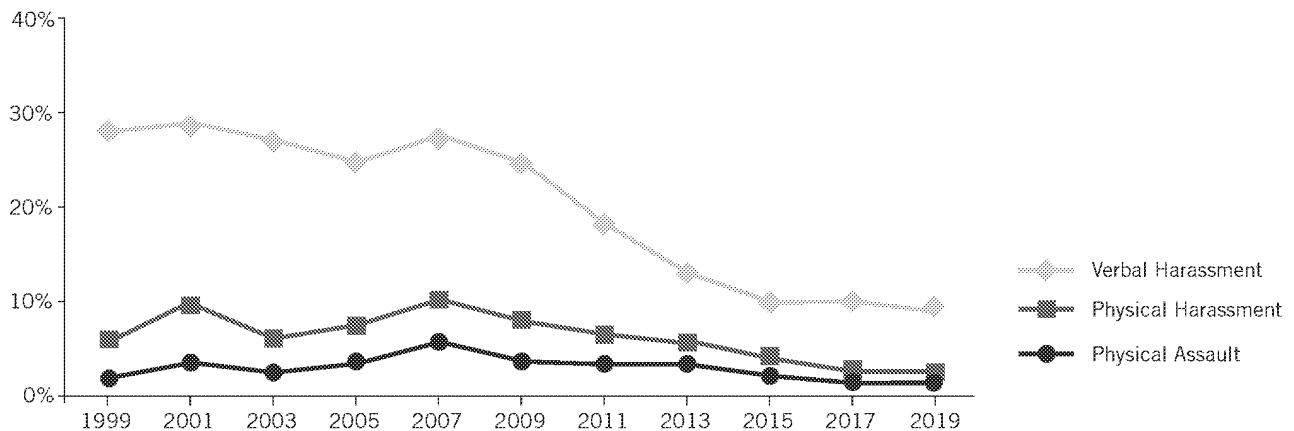
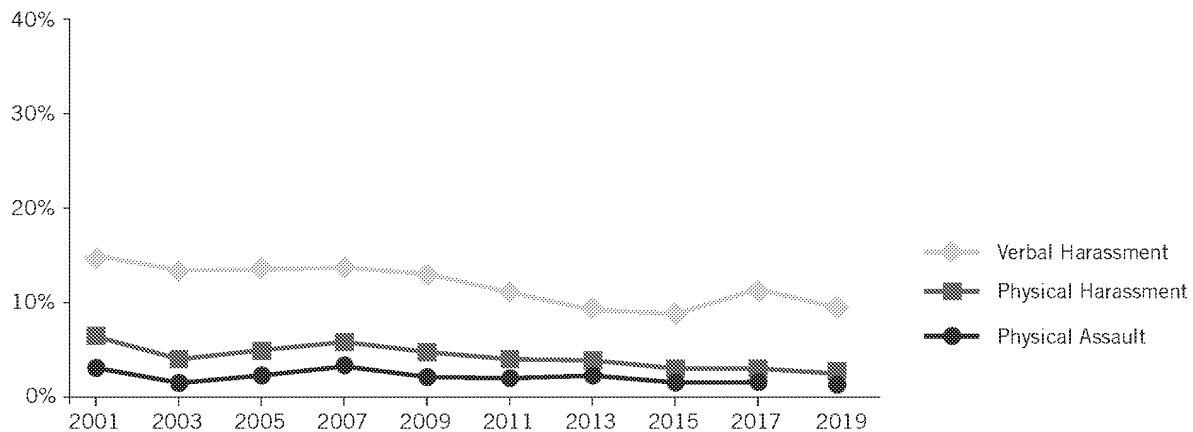


Figure 4.7 Frequency of Victimization Based on Gender Expression Over Time
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting Event Frequently or Often, Based on Estimated Marginal Means)



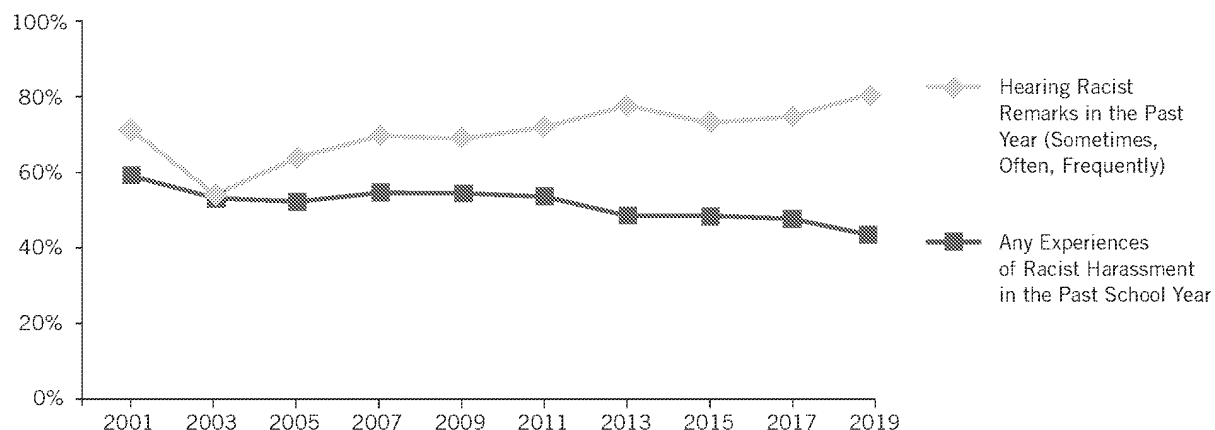
Since 2001, the GLSEN National School Climate Survey has included questions assessing the frequency of LGBTQ students' hearing racist remarks in school and their experiences with victimization based on actual or perceived race/ethnicity. As shown in Part 3 of this report, among LGBTQ students of color groups, just over a third to nearly half experienced both anti-LGBTQ and racist victimization at school (see "School Climate and Racial/Ethnic Identity" section). However, we know of no prior research on differences in LGBTQ students of color's experiences with racist victimization over time. Therefore, we examined potential changes from 2001 to the present 2019 survey with regard to LGBTQ students of color's experiences with racist events at school. Specifically, we examined whether there were differences in hearing racist remarks and differences in experiences with racist victimization for all students of color across survey years.

With regard to hearing racist remarks, we found significant differences among students of color over time. The figure shows an increasing trend in the frequency of racist remarks starting from 2003. The frequency of racist remarks was higher in 2019 than all previous years, except there was no difference between 2013 and 2019.¹

With regard to racist harassment at school, there were also differences among all students of color over time — LGBTQ students of color in 2019 were less likely to experience racist harassment than those in all prior years.²

Overall, there was an increase in racist remarks, but a decrease in racist victimization over time for LGBTQ students of color. Because racist victimization is person-specific, it may be that it is covered under anti-bullying/harassment policies at their school, whereas racist remarks are not necessarily person-specific. Thus, school personnel may intervene more often when racist victimization occurs in their presence because they understand that to be a clear violation of school policy, and in turn, intervention may curtail future incidents of victimization. Similarly, it is also possible that students understand that bullying, harassment or assault regarding another student's race/ethnicity is not acceptable in school, but may not have the same understanding with regard to racist remarks. Educators, school administrators, and advocates should make efforts to ensure that all LGBTQ students feel safe and inclusive at their school, not only based on their LGBTQ identity, but also based on their other identities, including race/ethnicity. This includes addressing school incidents of racist victimization toward LGBTQ students of color, as well as racist remarks that LGBTQ students of color are exposed to at their school.

Hearing Racist Remarks and Experiences of Racist Harassment Among LGBTQ Students of Color Over Time
 (based on estimated marginal means)



¹ To examine differences across years among LGBTQ students of color in the frequency of hearing racist remarks, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was performed, with Survey Year as the independent variable, controlling for demographic and method differences across the survey years. The main effect for Survey Year was significant: $F(9, 25069) = 14.44, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .01$. In examining post-hoc year-by-year comparisons, differences were considered at $p < .01$ (non-significant pairs not listed): 2019 > 2001 to 2011, 2015, 2017; 2017 > 2003 to 2011, 2015 < 2019; 2015 > 2003, 2005, < 2019, 2017; 2013 > 2003 to 2011; 2011 > 2003, 2005, < 2013, 2017, 2019; 2009 > 2003, < 2013, 2017, 2019; 2007 > 2003, 2005, < 2013, 2017, 2019; 2005 < 2007, 2011 to 2019; 2003 < 2007 to 2019; 2001 < 2019. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

² Because of methodological changes to the question about race-based harassment, we examined differences in the frequencies of any experiences of this type of harassment. To examine differences across years and across racial groups in the frequency of race-based harassment, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was performed, with Survey Year as the independent variable, controlling for demographic and method differences across the survey years. The main effect for Survey Year was significant: $F(9, 24873) = 15.82, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .01$. In examining post-hoc group comparisons, differences were considered at $p < .01$ (non-significant pairs not listed): 2019 < all prior years; 2017 and 2015 < 2001, 2007 to 2011, > 2019; 2013, 2011, 2009, and 2007 > 2013 to 2019; 2005 and 2003 > 2019; 2001 > 2013 to 2019.

In 2003, we began asking students about the frequency of students reporting experiences of victimization to school staff. Across years, as shown in Figure 4.8, we saw that the highest level of reporting was in 2003 and the lowest levels in 2007 and 2009. Since that time, we saw a small but significant incline in the frequency of reporting up to 2017. The frequency of reporting did not differ between 2017 and 2019, but LGBTQ students in these years were more likely to report victimization to school personnel than all prior years except for 2003.³⁷⁹

In 2005, we began asking students how effective their teachers or other school staff were in addressing incidents of harassment and assault when students reported them. Across all years, a minority of students reported that any intervention on the part of school staff was effective—generally between 30% and 40% reported that staff intervention was somewhat or very effective across years (see Figure 4.8). The highest levels of effectiveness were reported in 2005 and 2011. In 2019, the effectiveness of reporting was similar to 2013, 2015, and 2017, and was somewhat lower than prior years, specifically 2005, 2009, and 2011.³⁸⁰

Considering all changes over time with regard to victimization, we have seen significant improvements from the first years of our biennial survey, but few changes in recent years. There have been some improvements in 2019—small, but significant decreases in most types of victimization related to sexual orientation and gender expression. However, the most commonly reported type of

victimization across year, verbal harassment based on sexual orientation, has not improved in recent years. With regard to reporting harassment and assault, it is hopeful that the higher level of reporting we saw in 2017 remained constant in 2019, but nevertheless has not increased. Further, LGBTQ students have continued to see reporting victimization to school personnel as less effective in recent years. It may be that LGBTQ students may feel more empowered to report problems, perhaps related to the presence of school policies on bullying and harassment, but school staff may still be lacking in the professional development to adequately address these issues at school. In sum, although we do not see an overall trend that schools are becoming appreciably safer for LGBTQ students, we do not see that they have become significantly worse. These trends continue to give us concern in light of the high levels of victimization that LGBTQ students were reporting in their schools in 2019.

Experiences of Discrimination Over Time

In addition to hearing anti-LGBTQ remarks in the hallways and directly experiencing victimization from other students, LGBTQ-related discriminatory policies and practices also contribute to a hostile school experience for LGBTQ students. As mentioned previously in the section “Experiences of Discrimination at School,” we began asking students about a number of specific LGBTQ-related discriminatory policies and practices at their school in 2013, and in the following section, we examine how these experiences may have changed between 2013 and 2019.³⁸¹

Figure 4.8 Frequency of Reporting Victimization to School Staff and Effectiveness of Reporting Over Time
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students, Based on Estimated Marginal Means)

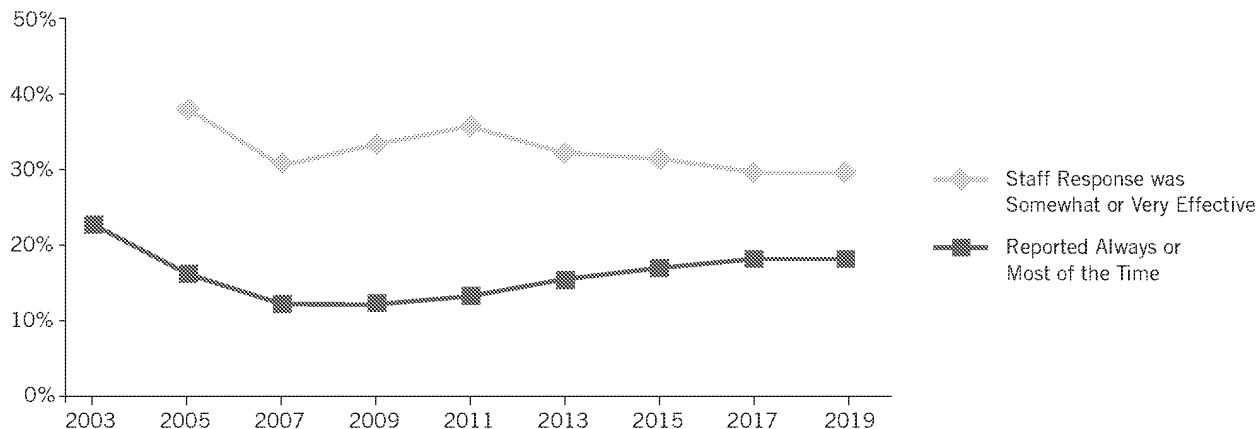


Figure 4.9 Frequency of Experiences with Discriminatory Policies and Practices Over Time
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students, Based on Estimated Marginal Means)

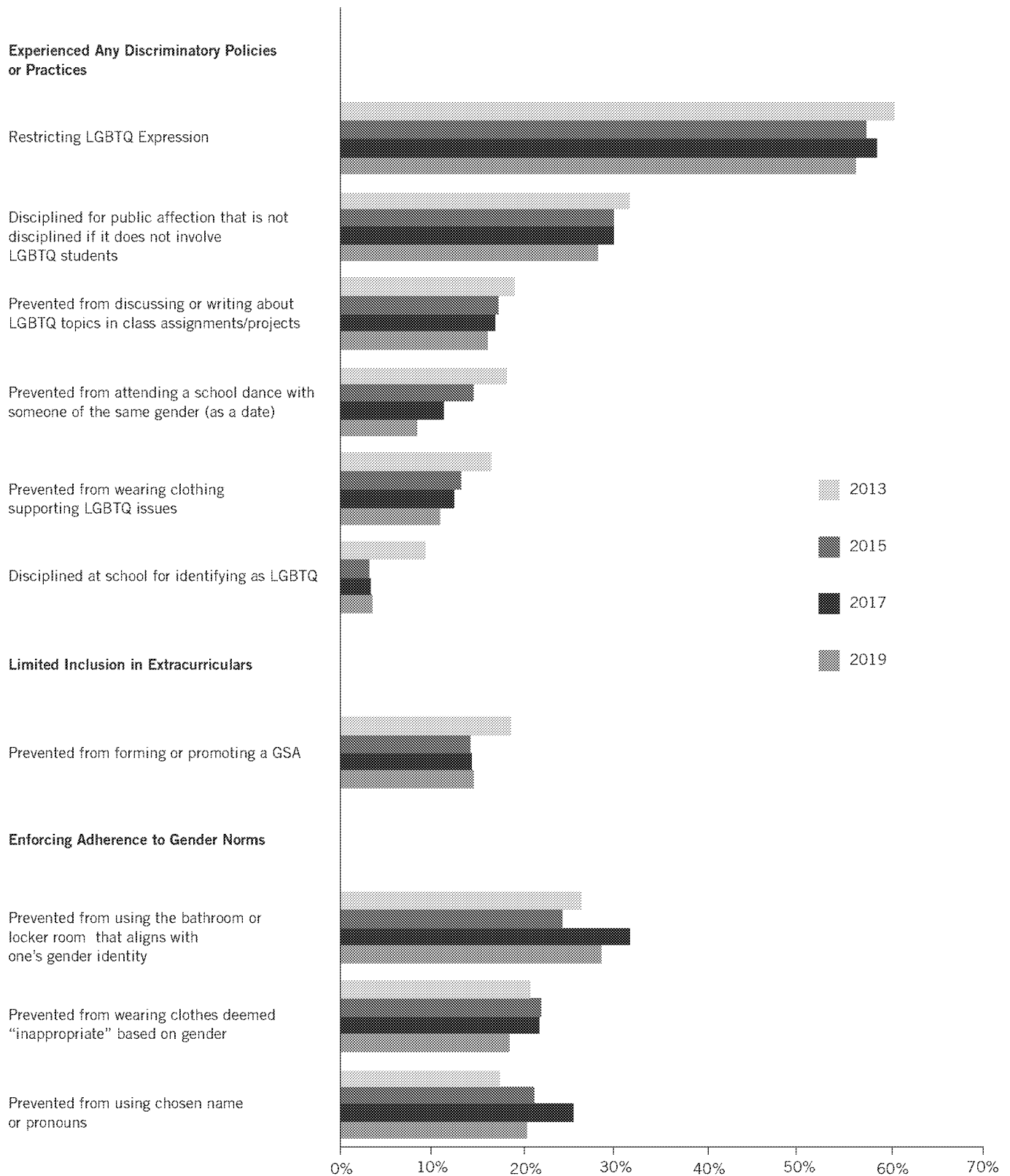


Figure 4.9 shows the incidence of having had any experience with anti-LGBTQ discrimination at school over the four time points, along with the incidences for the specific types of discriminatory policies or practices asked across the four surveys. Overall, over half of LGBTQ students experienced some type of LGBTQ-related discrimination at school at all four time points. This percentage was highest in 2013, and lower in 2019 than 2013 and 2017.³⁸²

With regard to the specific forms of discrimination, the percentages for most forms were highest in 2013, with a few notable exceptions.³⁸³ Overall in 2019, we saw a decline in most other forms of discrimination from prior years. Two forms of discrimination that were specific to gender — prevented from using facilities that align with one's gender and prevented from using one's preferred name or pronouns — were highest in 2017, but decreased from 2017 to 2019. However, the third gender-specific form of discrimination — being prohibited from wearing clothes of another gender — had not changed between 2013 and 2017, but was lower in 2019 than all prior years.

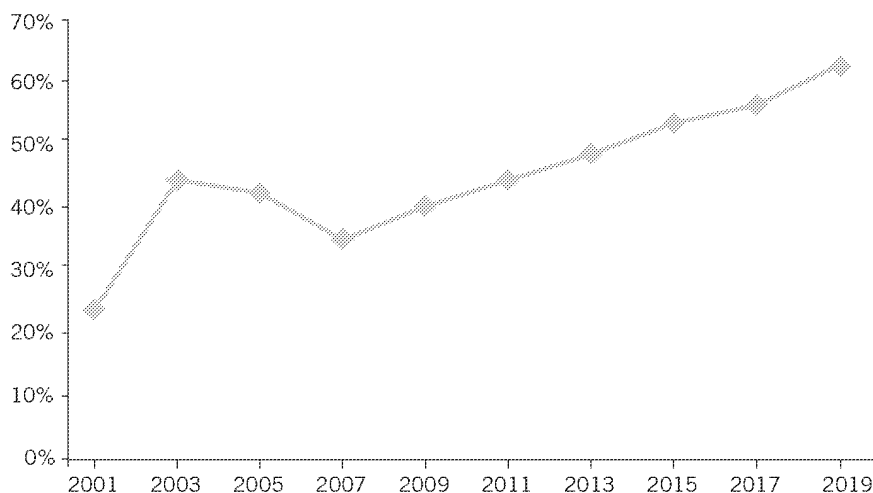
LGBTQ-Related Resources Over Time

In 2001, we began asking LGBTQ students in the NSCS about the availability of LGBTQ-related resources in school, such as GSAs (Gay-Straight Alliances or Gender and Sexuality Alliances) and curricular resources. In this section, we examine the levels of availability of these supportive school resources over time.

Supportive student clubs. As shown in Figure 4.10, we continue to see a steady, significant increase from previous years in the percentage of LGBTQ students having a GSA at school.³⁸⁴ The percentage of students reporting that they had a GSA at school has increased from under 40% in 2007 to over 60% in 2019. The percentage of LGBTQ students who reported having a GSA in their school in 2019 was significantly higher than all prior years.

Inclusive curricular resources. Overall, there have been a few positive changes in LGBTQ-related curricular resources over time (see Figure 4.11). With regard to internet access to LGBTQ content on school computers, we saw a significant increase across years between 2007 and 2019, including an increase from 2017 to 2019. With regard to LGBTQ-related books and resources in school libraries, we saw a significant increase in 2019; the percentage in 2019 was higher than all prior years. However, with regard to LGBTQ inclusion in textbooks and class resources and being taught positive LGBTQ material in class, not only have these types of inclusion been the least common overall, they have also remained unchanged in recent years.³⁸⁵ It is interesting to note that there has not been much change over the years with regard to LGBTQ students being taught negative LGBTQ-related content in class. Since we first asked this question in 2013, the percentage increased slightly in 2015, and had not changed from 2015 to 2019.³⁸⁶

Figure 4.10 Availability of GSAs Over Time
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting Having GSA in School, Accounting for Covariates)



Supportive school personnel. Figure 4.12 shows the percentage of students reporting any supportive educators (from 2001 to 2019) and the percentage of students reporting a higher number of supportive educators (from 2003 to 2019).³⁸⁷ Across the years, we have seen a positive increasing trend in the number of supportive educators at school. Regarding the percentage of students who had any supportive educators at school, 2019 was higher than all prior years. In 2001, approximately 60% of LGBTQ students reported having at least one supportive educator, whereas in 2019, nearly all students did so. LGBTQ students in 2019 also reported a significantly higher number of supportive educators than all prior years. As shown in Figure 4.12, the percentage reporting 6 or more supportive educators ranged from under 50% in the earlier years of the survey compared to nearly 70% in 2019.

Bullying, harassment, and assault policies. In all years, as shown in Figure 4.13, the majority of LGBTQ students reported that their schools had some type of anti-bullying/harassment policy; however, the minority of students reported that the policy enumerated sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression. Overall, there was a sharp increase in the number of students reporting any type of policy after 2009, and the rate has remained more or less consistent since 2011. From 2011 to 2015, there had been consistent yet small increases with regard to any type of anti-bullying/harassment policy, followed by a small decline from 2015 to 2017, and the rate had not changed between 2017 and 2019.

With regard to enumerated policies, from 2015 to 2017 there was a small but significant increase in

Figure 4.11 Availability of Curricular Resources Over Time
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting Resource in School, Accounting for Covariates)

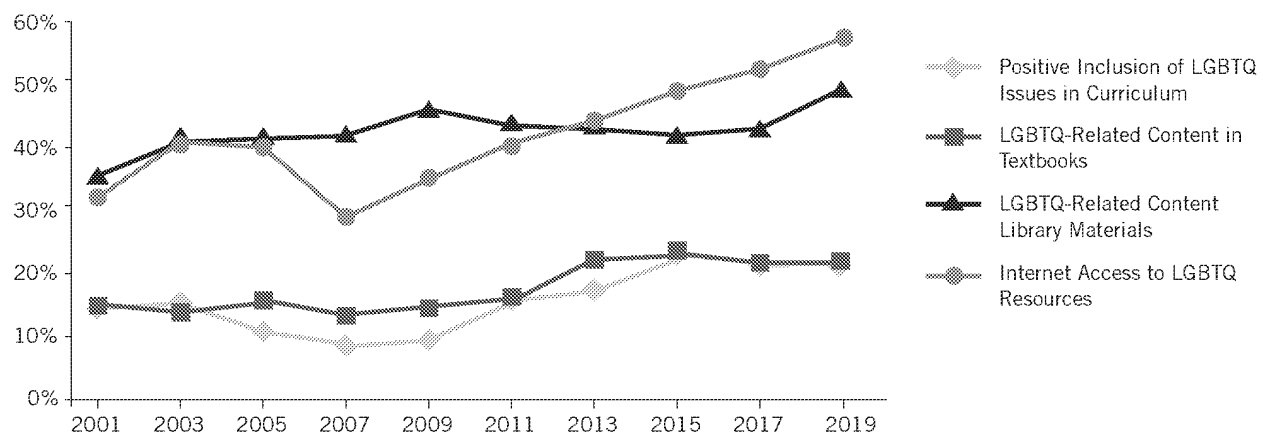
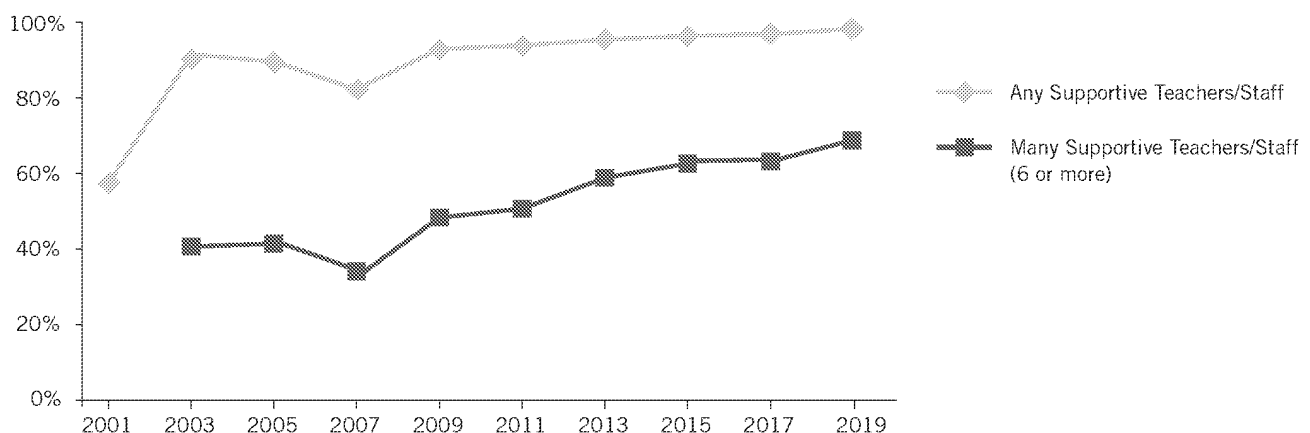


Figure 4.12 Availability of Supportive School Staff Over Time
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting Having Supportive Staff in School, Accounting for Covariates)



the number of students reporting comprehensive policies in their schools and the rate has remained similar between 2017 and 2019. In 2019 and 2017, the rate of comprehensive policies was higher than all prior years. There was also a small but significant decrease in the number reporting partially enumerated policies from 2017 to 2019, and the rate was lowest in 2019 than all previous years.³⁸⁸ Thus, even though the percentage of LGBTQ students reporting any type of anti-bullying/harassment policy in their school had not increased in recent years, we saw an increase in the percentage of policies that were fully enumerated.

In our 2017 NSCS, we saw that the availability of many LGBTQ-related resources in schools had largely leveled off. In 2019, however, we saw increases in most resources. LGBTQ student in 2019 were more likely to report having a GSA, school personnel who were supportive of LGBTQ students, access to LGBTQ information from school libraries and school computers, and comprehensive policies. However, it is important to note that curricular inclusion — LGBTQ inclusion in textbooks and class resources and being taught positive LGBTQ material in class — were not only the most uncommon of all resources across all years of the survey, but their rates of availability had not changed in recent years.

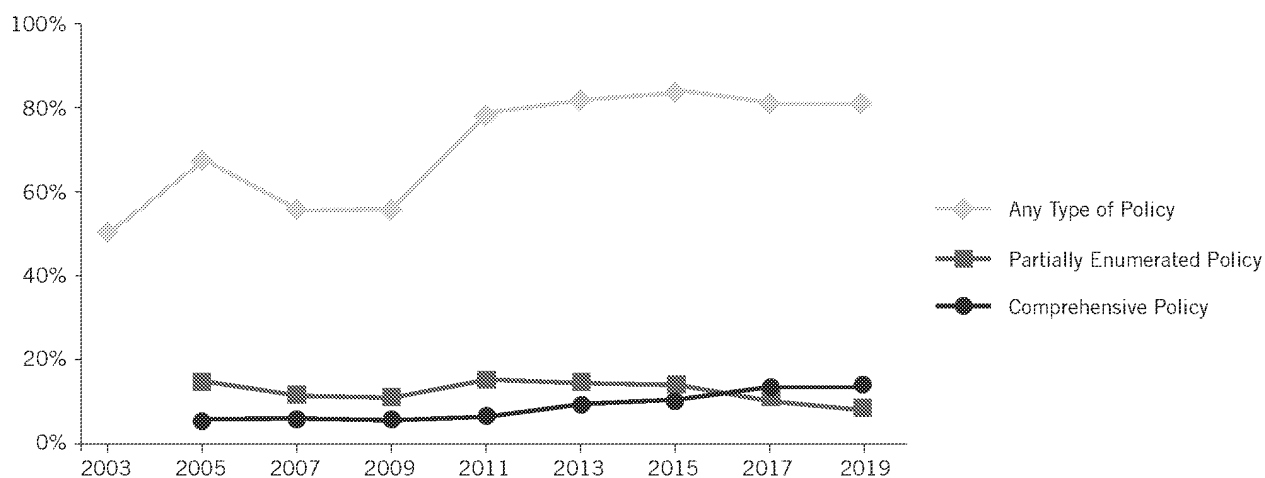
Student Acceptance of LGBTQ People Over Time

Previously in this part of the report, we noted that the frequency of student intervention with regard to homophobic remarks was lowest in 2019 than all prior years, and student intervention with regard to negative remarks about gender expression had decreased in 2019. These findings raise the question as to whether student attitudes about LGBTQ people have changed, and if so, in what ways. However, we also found positive changes in the availability of LGBTQ supports in schools, which we found to be directly related to a more accepting student body (see the “Utility of School-Based Resources and Supports” section of this report). For these reasons, we examined whether student attitudes toward LGBTQ people have changed over time, and found that although student acceptance steadily increased from 2011 to 2015, it has largely level off since that time (see Figure 4.14).³⁸⁹

Conclusions

Considering all the differences across time — remarks, victimization, LGBTQ-related supports, and peer acceptance — we see a complex picture of how school climate is changing for LGBTQ

Figure 4.13 Prevalence of School or District Anti-Bullying/Harassment Policies Over Time
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting Policy, Accounting for Covariates)



students. Certain types of homophobic remarks, like “fag” or “dyke,” and negative remarks about gender expression showed a decline in 2019, after no change in 2017. Further, negative transgender remarks have decreased from 2017 to 2019. However, homophobic remarks like “that’s so gay” and “no homo” increased in 2019. In addition, intervention when hearing anti-LGBTQ remarks in school, by staff or other students, generally has not changed in recent years, with the exception of student intervention regarding homophobic remarks, which was lowest in 2019.

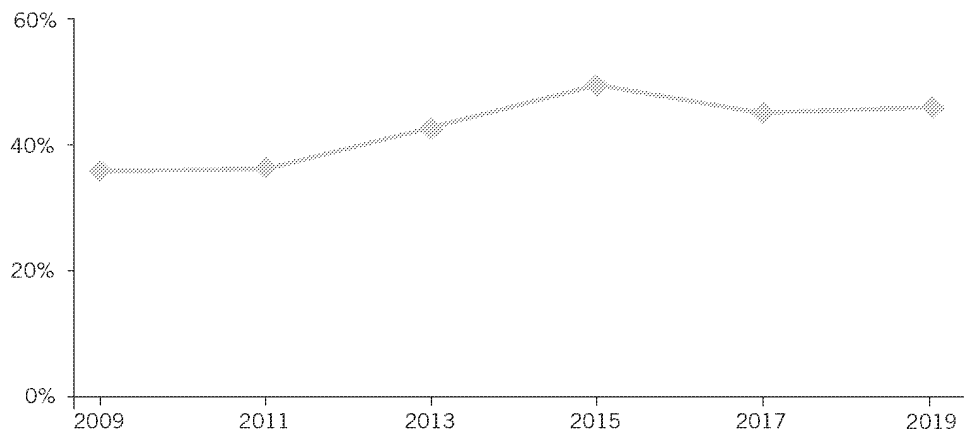
With regard to experiences of harassment and assault, we again have seen few changes in recent years. There have been some improvements in 2019 — small, but significant decreases in most types of victimization related to sexual orientation and gender expression. However, the most commonly reported type of victimization across the years, verbal harassment based on sexual orientation, has not improved in recent years. In sum, although we do not see an overall trend that schools have become appreciably safer for LGBTQ students in 2019, we do not see that they have become significantly worse.

We have seen promising increases in many LGBTQ supports in school. LGBTQ students in 2019 were more likely to report having a GSA, school personnel who were supportive of LGBTQ students, access to LGBTQ information from school libraries

and school computers, and comprehensive anti-bullying and harassment policies. In 2017, in contrast, we had seen few positive changes with regard to school resources. It may be that the lack of change in supports in 2017 is related to few changes in negative indicators of school climate in 2019 — it may take time for school supports to combat a negative school climate. Although we cannot know for sure, given our data each year is correlational, our results in future surveys may provide further insight. In that we have seen increases in school supports in 2019, it is possible that LGBTQ students in 2021 will see the continued benefits of these resources and have fewer negative experiences at school related to their LGBTQ identities.

In that LGBTQ student issues have been under attack in recent years, with the U.S. Department of Education’s revocation of the Title IX guidance on transgender students and failure to investigate complaints of discrimination by LGBTQ students, the fact that we have seen increases in many LGBTQ supports in schools and that we have not seen a tremendous worsening of school climate may be a testament to the resilience and strength of our LGBTQ young people in this country, and to the resourcefulness and dedication of school personnel for continuing to offer support and resources to create safer and more affirming school environments for their students.

Figure 4.14 Perceptions of Peer Acceptance of LGBTQ People Over Time
(Percentage of LGBTQ Students Reporting Somewhat or Very Accepting Peers, Accounting for Covariates)



DISCUSSION

Student organizers gathered at GLSEN's
2007 Summer Start week of training.

Limitations

Although there are no national population parameters regarding LGBTQ youth, we believe that the methods used for our survey resulted in a nationally representative sample of LGBTQ students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (or another non-heterosexual sexual orientation and/or non-cisgender gender identity) and who were able to find out about the survey in some way, either through a connection to LGBTQ or youth-serving organizations that publicized the survey, or through social media. As discussed in the “Methods and Sample” section, we conducted targeted advertising on the social media sites Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat in order to broaden our reach and obtain a more representative sample. Advertising on these sites allowed LGBTQ students who did not necessarily have any formal connection to the LGBTQ community to participate in the survey. However, the social media advertisements for the survey were sent only to youth who visited pages that included LGBTQ content.³⁹⁰ LGBTQ youth who were not comfortable viewing pages with LGBTQ content would not have received the advertisement about the survey. Thus, LGBTQ youth who are perhaps the most isolated — those without a formal connection to the LGBTQ community or without access to online resources and supports, and those who are not comfortable viewing LGBTQ content on social media — may be underrepresented in the survey sample.

The sample also did not include students who have a sexual attraction to the same gender or multiple genders, but who do not identify themselves as LGBTQ.³⁹¹ These youth may be more isolated, unaware of supports available to them, or, even if aware, uncomfortable using such supports. Similarly, youth whose gender identity is not the same as their sex assigned at birth, but who do not identify as transgender, may also be more isolated and without the same access to resources as the youth in our survey. The survey was primarily advertised as being for LGBTQ students, so non-heterosexual students and non-cisgender students who did not identify as LGBTQ may be less likely to participate in the survey, even though they were included in the survey sample.

Another possible limitation to the survey is related to the sample's racial/ethnic composition — the percentage of LGBTQ African American/Black students and LGBTQ Hispanic/Latinx students were

lower, and LGBTQ White students was higher than compared to LGBTQ secondary school students from other population-based data.³⁹² In part, this discrepancy may be related to different methods for measuring race/ethnicity. In our survey, students were asked one question about their race/ethnicity, and could choose multiple options.³⁹³ In contrast, national youth surveys often include two questions — one about whether the respondent identifies as Hispanic/Latinx, and the other about their race.³⁹⁴ This difference in methodology may also impact how students choose to identify in the survey, and thus may account for some of the discrepancy in racial/ethnic representation between our LGBTQ sample and LGBTQ secondary students from other population-based data. Nevertheless, it is possible that LGBTQ African American/Black students and LGBTQ Hispanic/Latinx students were underrepresented, and LGBTQ White students were overrepresented in our sample. Additionally, because there are no national statistics on the demographic breakdown of transgender-identified youth, we cannot know how our transgender sample compares to other population-based studies.

Our sample, like other national samples of LGBTQ youth, included a small percentage of cisgender males who identified as gay, bisexual, or queer. It may be that these youth are less likely to be out in middle school or high school, and would be less likely to learn about the survey or feel comfortable taking a survey specifically for LGBTQ students. Additionally, our sample had a small percentage of transgender female students. In that our sample only includes students who had been in school during the 2018–2019 school year, it is possible that transgender girls leave school at higher rates than do transgender boys, thereby leading to fewer transgender girls eligible to take our survey. It is also possible that transgender boys come out earlier than do transgender girls, which would lead to lower numbers of transgender female secondary school students.

Given that our survey is available only in English and Spanish, LGBTQ students who are not proficient in either of those languages might be limited in their ability to participate. Thus, these students may also be underrepresented in our survey sample.

It is also important to note that our survey only reflects the experiences of LGBTQ students who were in school during the 2018–2019 school year.

Although our sample does allow for students who had left school at some point during the 2018–2019 school year to participate, it still does not reflect the experiences of LGBTQ youth who may have already dropped out in prior school years. The experiences of these youth may likely differ from those students who remained in school, particularly with regard to hostile school climate, access to supportive resources, severity of school discipline, and educational aspirations.

Lastly, the data from our survey are cross-sectional (i.e., the data were collected at one point in time), which means that we cannot determine causality. For example, although we can say that there was a relationship between the number of supportive staff and students' academic achievement, we cannot say that one predicts the other.

While considering these limitations, our attempts at diverse recruitment of a hard-to-reach population have yielded a sample of LGBTQ students that we believe most likely closely reflects the population of LGBTQ middle and high school students in the U.S.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The 2019 National School Climate Survey continues to provide evidence that schools are often unsafe learning environments for LGBTQ students. Hearing biased or derogatory language at school, especially sexist remarks, homophobic remarks, and negative remarks about gender expression, was a common occurrence. However, teachers and other school authorities did not often intervene when anti-LGBTQ remarks were made in their presence, and students' use of such language remained largely unchallenged. Almost 8 in 10 students in our survey reported feeling unsafe at school because of at least one personal characteristic, with sexual orientation and gender expression being the most commonly reported characteristics. Students also frequently reported avoiding spaces in their schools that they perceived as being unsafe, especially bathrooms, locker rooms, and physical education (P.E.) or gym classes. More than two-thirds of LGBTQ students reported that they had been verbally harassed at school based on their sexual orientation, and nearly 6 in 10 students had been harassed based on their gender expression. In addition, many students reported experiencing incidents of physical harassment and assault related to their sexual orientation or gender expression, as well as other incidents of victimization such as sexual

harassment, cyberbullying, and deliberate property damage at school.

In addition to anti-LGBTQ behavior by peers, be it biased language in the hallways or direct personal victimization, the majority of LGBTQ students also faced anti-LGBTQ discriminatory school policies and practices. Schools prohibited LGBTQ students from expressing themselves through their clothing or their relationships, limited LGBTQ inclusion in curricular and extracurricular activities, and enforced other policies that negatively affected transgender and nonbinary students in particular, such as preventing use of their chosen name or pronoun.

LGBTQ students are a diverse population, and the results from our 2019 survey reveal important differences among these students. Transgender and nonbinary students in particular were more likely to have felt unsafe and face anti-LGBTQ victimization at school than their cisgender LGBTQ peers. Similarly, pansexual students were more likely to feel unsafe and experienced greater levels of anti-LGBTQ victimization than their LGBTQ peers with other sexual orientations. Furthermore, we found that LGBTQ students of color (including Black, AAPI, Latinx, Native and Indigenous, MENA, and multiracial LGBTQ students) commonly experienced both racist and anti-LGBTQ victimization at school, and were more likely to experience multiple forms of victimization than White LGBTQ students.

Results from our survey also demonstrate the serious consequences that anti-LGBTQ victimization and discrimination can have on LGBTQ students' academic success and their general well-being. LGBTQ students who experienced frequent harassment and assault based on their sexual orientation or gender expression reported missing more days of school, having lower GPAs, lower educational aspirations, and higher rates of school discipline than students who were harassed less often. In addition, students who experienced higher levels of victimization felt less connected to their school community and had poorer psychological well-being. LGBTQ students who reported experiencing anti-LGBTQ discrimination at school also had worse educational outcomes, including missing more days of school, lower GPAs, and lower educational aspirations, and were more likely to be disciplined at school, than students who did not experience anti-LGBTQ

discrimination. Furthermore, students who experienced anti-LGBTQ discrimination also felt less connected to their school community and had poorer psychological well-being.

Although our results suggest that school climate remains unsafe and hostile environments for many LGBTQ students, they also call attention to the important role that institutional supports and resources have in making schools safer and promoting better educational outcomes and healthy youth development for these students. Our findings demonstrate the important role that supportive school staff play in creating safer and more affirming learning environments for LGBTQ students. Supportive educators positively influenced students' academic performance, educational aspirations, feelings of safety, school absenteeism (missing fewer days of school), psychological well-being, and connection to their school community. Furthermore, when staff responded effectively to incidents of victimization, LGBTQ students reported less anti-LGBTQ victimization than LGBTQ students in schools where staff responded ineffectively.

In addition to their role in providing direct support and in intervening when anti-LGBTQ events occur at school, educators also serve a crucial role in teaching a curriculum that includes positive representations of LGBTQ people, history, and events. By teaching about LGBTQ topics in a positive manner, educators may enhance the connections of their LGBTQ students to the school environment and to learning, in general. Students in schools where their classroom included positive representations of LGBTQ history, people, or events had better educational outcomes, were more comfortable engaging in conversations about LGBTQ issues with their teachers, and had a greater connection to their school community. Furthermore, by teaching positive LGBTQ-related content in class, educators may also increase the knowledge, awareness, and acceptance of LGBTQ people for all students in school. LGBTQ students who reported positive curricular inclusion were less likely to feel unsafe and miss school for safety reasons, and reported less hostile behavior from peers (i.e., less anti-LGBTQ language and victimization). Students with positive curricular inclusion also reported that their peers were more likely to intervene regarding anti-LGBTQ biased remarks, and were more accepting of LGBTQ people in general.

“I sincerely hope that queer kids in future generations do not have to go through what I have been through and will most likely continue to suffer through.”

Our findings indicate that Gay-Straight Alliances/ Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) and similar clubs also play a key role in improving school climate for LGBTQ students. Students who attended schools with a GSA or similar club were less likely to feel unsafe at school and miss school for safety reasons, heard fewer anti-LGBTQ remarks at school, reported more frequent staff and peer intervention regarding anti-LGBTQ remarks, and experienced less anti-LGBTQ victimization. Thus, GSAs may demonstrate to the whole school community that anti-LGBTQ behaviors should not be tolerated, and that they must be addressed when they do occur. Students who had a GSA at school also reported that their peers were more accepting of LGBTQ people in general, indicating that GSAs may provide awareness to the student community of LGBTQ student issues. Furthermore, having a GSA at school was also associated with a greater sense of belonging to the school community and greater psychological well-being among LGBTQ students, perhaps as a result of the overall positive impact of GSAs on the school environment.

With regard to school policies, our findings indicate important benefits associated with both comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies, as well as policies affirming the rights of transgender and nonbinary students. LGBTQ students with comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies that included protections for sexual orientation and gender identity/expression reported hearing less anti-LGBTQ language and reported lower levels of anti-LGBTQ victimization. Such policies may provide guidance for educators that these anti-LGBTQ behaviors must be addressed, as well as guidance on appropriate strategies for intervention. Our results indicate that LGBTQ students with comprehensive policies reported that staff were more likely to intervene regarding biased remarks, and were more effective in their responses to harassment and assault. We also found that LGBTQ students in schools with this type of policy were more likely

“It’s awful, and there needs to be some country-wide regulations to stop harassment, bullying, and etc. idk something! I have friends who are hurting much worse than me—and my heart is in constant pain for them.”

to report incidents of harassment and assault to school personnel, indicating that these policies may also provide important instruction for students on reporting. In addition, comprehensive policies may send a message to LGBTQ students that they are valued by the school community. Similarly, policies affirming transgender and nonbinary students’ rights appear to improve school climate, particularly for transgender and nonbinary students. Transgender and nonbinary students with such policies or guidelines were less likely to miss school because of feeling unsafe, felt a greater sense of belonging to their school community, and were less likely to experience gender-related discrimination.

Unfortunately, each of the LGBTQ-related resources and supports that we examined were not available to all LGBTQ students. GSAs were somewhat more common than other resources, although over a third of students did not have such a club at their school. Most students could not identify a large number of school staff (11 or more) who were supportive of LGBTQ students, and a small number were unable to identify any supportive staff. Furthermore, many LGBTQ students lacked access to positive LGBTQ information from school libraries and school computers, and few LGBTQ students reported being taught LGBTQ information in class or having this material in their textbooks and other class readings. With regard to supportive school policies, although a majority of students said that their school had some type of harassment/assault policy, few said that it was a comprehensive policy that explicitly stated protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, and only a tenth reported that they had official policies or guidelines to support transgender and nonbinary students at their schools. Finally, although all LGBTQ students commonly lacked access to supportive resources at school, those in middle schools, religiously-affiliated private schools, schools in rural areas, and schools in the South and Midwest, were all less likely than others to report having these resources. These findings underscore the importance of advocating for GSAs, supportive staff, inclusive curricular resources, and supportive school policies in all schools to ensure

positive learning environments for LGBTQ students everywhere—environments in which students can be successful in learning, graduate, and even continue on to further education.

The findings in this report also highlight some gains toward safe and inclusive schools for LGBTQ secondary school students since our last report. Certain types of homophobic remarks, such as “fag” or “dyke,” and negative remarks about gender expression have declined in 2019, after no change between 2015 and 2017. Further, negative remarks about transgender people decreased from 2017 to 2019. Our findings also indicate a sharp increase in students hearing the phrase “no homo.” However, this upward trend in frequency may be due in part to LGBTQ students reclaiming this phrase, and thus the degree to which LGBTQ students consider this language negative or derogatory is unclear. With regard to personal experiences of harassment and assault, we have seen few changes in recent years. There have been small but significant decreases in most types of anti-LGBTQ victimization. However, verbal harassment based on sexual orientation has not improved in recent years. We have also failed to see gains in intervention regarding anti-LGBTQ incidents. Rates of staff and student intervention regarding anti-LGBTQ remarks did not improve much in 2019. In fact, student intervention when hearing homophobic remarks has continued to decline since 2015. Further, the level of reporting harassment and assault to staff in 2019 was not different from 2017, and students have continued to see staff responses to victimization as less effective in recent years. We also continue to find that the majority of LGBTQ students experience some type of LGBTQ-related discriminatory policies and practices at school. However, there was an overall decline in most forms of anti-LGBTQ discrimination from prior years. Although there is an overall pattern that schools may be becoming appreciably safer for LGBTQ students, the trends we observed are not consistent and should remain a concern in light of the high levels of victimization that LGBTQ students continued to report in 2019.

There have been promising increases in the availability of LGBTQ-related positive supports in schools. Compared to prior years, LGBTQ students in 2019 reported more GSAs in schools, school personnel who were supportive of LGBTQ students, access to LGBTQ information from school libraries and school computers, and comprehensive anti-bullying and harassment policies. Although we saw increases in internet access to LGBTQ content on school computers and LGBTQ-related books and resources in school libraries, we have not seen much change regarding the number of students being taught positive LGBTQ material in class, or with LGBTQ-related content in textbooks and class resources. Further, these two aspects of curricular inclusion remain the least common of all school resources, as in all previous years.

It is also important to note that we observed few positive changes with regard to school resources in our 2017 report. This lack of improvement in school supports observed in 2017 may be related to the few improvements in negative indicators of school climate observed in 2019. It may take time for school supports to have a demonstrable, positive effect on school climate. In that we have seen increases in certain school supports in 2019, it is possible that LGBTQ students will see the continued benefits of these resources and have fewer negative experiences at school related to their LGBTQ identities in our next national survey of LGBTQ students.

LGBTQ student issues have been under attack in recent years, including the U.S. Department of Education's revocation of the Title IX guidance on transgender students and failure to investigate complaints of discrimination by LGBTQ students. Yet, we have not seen a parallel increase in many hostile school experiences in 2019. Further, we have seen greater access to certain LGBTQ-related supports and resources in schools. This continued progress may be a testament to the many school personnel who continue to offer support and resources aimed at creating safer and more affirming school environments for LGBTQ students. Nevertheless, hostile political and legislative government actions underscore the continued urgent need for action to create safer and more inclusive schools for LGBTQ students

across the country. There are steps that concerned stakeholders can take to remedy the situation. Results from the 2019 National School Climate Survey demonstrate the ways in which the presence of supportive student clubs, supportive educators, inclusive and supportive policies, and other school-based resources and supports can positively affect LGBTQ students' school experiences. Therefore, we recommend the following measures:

- Support student clubs, such as Gay-Straight Alliances or Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs), that provide support for LGBTQ students and address LGBTQ issues in education;
- Provide training for school staff to improve rates of intervention and increase the number of supportive teachers and other staff available to students;
- Increase student access to appropriate and accurate information regarding LGBTQ people, history, and events through inclusive curricula and library and Internet resources;
- Ensure that school policies and practices, such as those related to dress codes and school dances, do not discriminate against LGBTQ students;
- Enact and implement policies and practices to ensure transgender and nonbinary students have equal access to education, such as having access to gendered facilities that correspond to their gender; and
- Adopt and implement comprehensive school and district anti-bullying/harassment policies that specifically enumerate sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression as protected categories alongside others such as race, religion, and disability, with clear and effective systems for reporting and addressing incidents that students experience.

Instituting these measures can move us towards a future in which all students have the opportunity to learn and succeed in school, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Endnotes

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- 20 To test if the regional representation of our sample differed from national public school enrollment, a one-sample chi-square test was conducted comparing our observed population numbers by region to expected population numbers based on national projected enrollment for fall 2018 from the National Center for Education Statistics. The test was significant: $\chi^2 = 790.18$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$.
- 21 Sexual orientation was assessed with a multi-check item (i.e., gay, lesbian, straight/heterosexual, bisexual, pansexual, queer, and questioning) with an optional write-in item for sexual orientations not listed. Youth were allowed to endorse multiple options. Mutually exclusive categories were created at the data cleaning stage so that analyses could compare youth across sexual orientation categories using the following hierarchy: gay/lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, queer, questioning, and straight/heterosexual. Thus, as an example, if an individual identified as "gay" and "queer" they were categorized as "gay/lesbian"; if an individual identified as "bisexual" and "questioning," they were categorized as "bisexual."
- 22 Pansexual identity is commonly defined as experiencing attraction to some people, regardless of their gender identity. This identity may be distinct from a Bisexual identity, which is commonly described as either experiencing attraction to some male-identified people and some female-identified people or as experiencing attraction to some people of the same gender and some people of different genders.
- 23 Students who indicated that they were asexual and another sexual orientation were categorized as another sexual orientation. Additionally, students who indicated that their only sexual orientation was asexual and also indicated that they were cisgender

- were not included in the final study sample. Therefore, all students included in the Asexual category also are not cisgender (i.e., are transgender, genderqueer, another nonbinary identity, or questioning their gender).
- 24 Race/ethnicity was assessed with a single multi-check question item (i.e., African American or Black; Asian or South Asian; Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; Native American, American Indian, or Alaska Native; White or Caucasian; Hispanic or Latino/Latina/Latinx; and Arab American, Middle Eastern, or North African) with an optional write-in item for race/ethnicities not listed. Participants who selected more than one race category were coded as multiracial, with the exception of participants who selected either "Hispanic or Latino/Latina/Latinx" or "Arab American, Middle Eastern, or North African" as their ethnicity. Participants who selected either one ethnicity were coded as that ethnicity, regardless of any additional racial identities they selected. Participants who selected both ethnicities were coded as multiracial.
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 - 26 Gender was assessed via two items: an item assessing sex assigned at birth (i.e., male or female) and an item assessing gender identity (i.e., cisgender, transgender, nonbinary, genderqueer, male, female, questioning, and an additional write-in option). Based on responses to these two items, students' gender was categorized for these analyses as: Cisgender (including cisgender male, cisgender female, cisgender nonbinary/genderqueer, or unspecified male or female), Transgender (including transgender male, transgender female, transgender nonbinary/genderqueer, and transgender only), Nonbinary/Genderqueer (including nonbinary, genderqueer, nonbinary/genderqueer male, nonbinary/genderqueer female, or another nonbinary identity (i.e., those who wrote in identities such as "genderfluid," "agender" or "demigender") and Questioning. Students in the "nonbinary/genderqueer" group did not also identify as "transgender."
 - 27 Receiving educational accommodations was assessed with a question that asked students if they received any educational support services at school, including special education classes, extra time on tests, resource classes, or other accommodations.
 - 28 Students were placed into region based on the state they were from – Northeast: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, DC; South: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia; Midwest: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin; West: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming; U.S. Territories: American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands.
 - 29 Because of the large sample size and the multiple analyses conducted for this report, we use the more restrictive $p < .01$ in determinations of statistical significance for our analyses, unless otherwise indicated. To examine mean differences in feelings of unsafety a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted among the following "feeling unsafe because of..." variables: sexual orientation, gender expression, body size or weight, gender, disability, academic ability, family income, religion, race or ethnicity, how well one speaks English, citizenship status. The multivariate effect was significant, Pillai's Trace = .807, $F(12, 16556) = 5768.36$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .81$. Pairwise comparisons were considered at $p < .01$. All variables were significantly different with the following exception: English proficiency was not different from citizenship status.
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 - 32 Mean differences in the frequencies between types of biased remarks based on gender expression were examined using a paired samples t-test. The difference was significant, $t(16683) = 51.84$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .40$.
 - 33 Mean differences in the frequencies of intervention regarding homophobic remarks and gender expression remarks by school staff and by students were examined using paired samples t-tests and percentages given for illustrative purposes. The differences were significant at $p < .001$ – staff intervention: $t(10722) = -25.12$; student intervention: $t(15246) = 22.22$, Cohen's $d = .18$.
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- 35 Mean differences in the frequencies between homophobic remarks and gender expression remarks made by school staff were examined using a paired samples t-test. The difference was significant, $t(15289) = 50.67$, $p < .001$.
 - 36 Mean differences in the frequencies across types of biased remarks were examined using a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), and percentages are shown for illustrative purposes. The multivariate effect was significant, Pillai's Trace = .77, $F(10, 16597) = 5420.92$, $p < .001$. Differences were significant for all remarks, anti-LGBTQ and other remarks. Hearing sexist remarks was higher than all others. Hearing "gay" used in a negative way was lower than hearing sexist remarks, but higher than all other remarks. Hearing negative remarks about ability was lower than hearing sexist remarks, and "gay" used in a negative way, but higher than all other remarks. Hearing the phrase "no homo" was lower than hearing sexist remarks. "gay" used in a negative way, and negative remarks about ability, but was higher than all other remarks. Hearing negative remarks about body size/weight was lower than hearing sexist remarks, "gay" used in a negative way, negative remarks about ability, and "no homo," but higher than all other remarks. Hearing racist remarks was lower than hearing sexist remarks, "gay" used in a negative way, negative remarks about ability, "no homo," and negative remarks about body size/weight, but higher than all other remarks. Hearing other homophobic remarks was higher than hearing negative remarks about gender expression, transgender people, religion, and immigration status, but lower than all other remarks. Hearing negative remarks about gender expression was higher than negative remarks about transgender people, religion, and immigration status, but lower than all other remarks. Hearing negative remarks about transgender people was higher than hearing negative remarks about religion and immigration status, but lower than all other remarks.

- Hearing negative remarks about religion was higher than hearing negative remarks about immigration status, but lower than all other remarks. Hearing negative remarks about immigration status was lower than all other remarks.
- 37 Mean differences in the frequencies of verbal harassment based on sexual orientation, gender, and gender expression were examined using repeated measures multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA): Pillai's Trace = .05, $F(2, 16482) = 391.81$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. Univariate effects were considered at $p < .01$. Students experienced verbal harassment based on sexual orientation more commonly than gender expression or gender; students experienced verbal harassment based on gender expression more commonly than gender. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
 - 38 Mean differences in the frequencies of physical harassment based on sexual orientation, gender, and gender expression were examined using repeated measures multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA): Pillai's Trace = .007, $F(2, 16364) = 54.55$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. Univariate effects were considered at $p < .01$. Students experienced physical harassment based on sexual orientation more commonly than gender expression or gender; we did not observe a difference between physical harassment based on gender expression and based on gender. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
 - 39 Mean differences in the percentage of students who had ever experienced verbal harassment, physical harassment, and physical assault based on sexual orientation, gender, or gender expression were examined using repeated measures multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA): Pillai's Trace = .66, $F(2, 16071) = 15652.01$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .66$. Pairwise comparisons were considered at $p < .01$. Students were more likely to experience verbal harassment than physical harassment or physical assault; students were more likely to experience physical harassment than physical assault.
 - 40 Mean differences in the frequencies of physical assault based on sexual orientation, gender, and gender expression were examined using repeated measures multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA): Pillai's Trace = .00, $F(2, 16203) = 23.99$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$. Univariate effects were considered at $p < .01$. Students experienced physical assault based on sexual orientation more commonly than gender expression or gender; we did not observe a difference between physical assault based on gender expression and based on gender. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
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 - 43 To test differences in frequency of reporting victimization to family members by outness to family members, we conducted an independent samples t-test among LGBTQ students who had experienced victimization, where frequency of reporting to family was the dependent variable and being out or not was the independent variable. Results were significant, $t(8543.35) = -26.49$, $p < .001$.
 - 44 To test differences on severity of experiences with anti-LGBTQ victimization between those who reported that they did not report victimization because it was "not that serious" and those who did not cite this reason for not reporting victimization, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with three weighted victimization variables (based on sexual orientation, gender, and gender expression) as dependent variables. The independent variable was dichotomous, where 1 = "not that serious" and "0" indicated that students had not cited this reason for not reporting victimization to school staff. Multivariate results were significant: Pillai's Trace = .05, $F(3, 9937) = 165.92$, $p < .001$. Univariate effects for all three types of anti-LGBTQ victimization were significant. Victimization based on sexual orientation: $F(1, 9939) = 453.23$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$; Victimization based on gender: $F(1, 9939) = 318.38$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$; Victimization based on gender expression: $F(1, 9939) = 366.63$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. Students who said that they did not report victimization because it was not that serious had lower levels of victimization based on sexual orientation, victimization based on gender, and victimization based on gender expression, than students who did not say this as a reason for not reporting victimization.
 - 45 We define effectiveness in two different ways, one is whether staff made a positive impact on the school climate for the student who experienced the harassment or assault (e.g., preventing future harassment and assault), and the other is whether staff comforted the student who experienced the harassment or assault.
 - 46 Chi-square tests were performed examining type of school staff response by whether it was perceived to be effective or ineffective (dichotomous variable was created for effectiveness: effective = "very effective" or "somewhat effective"; ineffective = "not at all effective" or "somewhat ineffective"). Responses that were more likely to be effective: Disciplined perpetrator: $\chi^2 = 599.92$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = .35$; Educated perpetrator about bullying: $\chi^2 = 262.38$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = .23$; Contacted perpetrator's parents: $\chi^2 = 222.19$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = .22$; and Provided emotional support: $\chi^2 = 634.90$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = .36$.
 - 47 Chi-square tests were performed examining type of school staff response by whether it was perceived to be effective or ineffective (dichotomous variable was created for effectiveness: effective = "very effective" or "somewhat effective"; ineffective = "not at all effective" or "somewhat ineffective"). Responses that were more likely to be ineffective: Told reporting student to change their behavior: $\chi^2 = 289.72$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = -.25$; Disciplined the reporting student: $\chi^2 = 88.99$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = -.14$; Did nothing/Told student to ignore: $\chi^2 = 1151.29$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = -.49$; Talked to the perpetrator/told the perpetrator to stop: $\chi^2 = 395.43$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = -.29$; Filed a report: $\chi^2 = 161.59$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = -.18$; Referred the incident to another staff member: $\chi^2 = 70.22$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = -.12$; Contacted the reporting student's parents: $\chi^2 = 31.26$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = -.08$; Used peer mediation/conflict resolution approach: $\chi^2 = 46.63$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = -.10$; Educated class/school about bullying: $\chi^2 = 45.12$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = -.10$; and Separated students: $\chi^2 = 190.63$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = -.20$.
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 - 51 The Day of Silence is a national student-led event, coordinated by GLSEN, that is designed to draw attention to anti-LGBTQ name-calling, bullying, and harassment in schools. Visit dayofsilence.org for more information
 - 52 A series of chi-square tests were conducted to examine the relationship between locker room discrimination and: sports participation (intramural or interscholastic), avoiding gym/physical education classes, avoiding sports fields, and avoiding locker rooms. The results for all tests were significant. Sports participation: $\chi^2 = 66.40$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = -.07$; avoiding gym: $\chi^2 = 905.43$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = .24$; avoiding sports fields: $\chi^2 = 492.08$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = .17$; avoiding locker rooms: $\chi^2 = 1191.28$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = .27$.
 - 53 American Medical Association. (2018). *Transgender individuals' access to public facilities*. <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/2019-03/transgender-public-facilities-issue-brief.pdf>
 - 54 A chi-square test was conducted to compare avoiding bathrooms by

- experiences of bathroom-based discrimination: $\chi^2 = 1873.89$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = .34$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
- 55 A small percentage of survey respondents (1.0%) attended single-sex schools. Given that single-sex schools are uniquely gendered spaces, all analyses regarding gender separation in schools excluded students who attended single-sex schools. More information about the experiences of LGBTQ students in single-sex schools can be found in the *School Climate and School Characteristics* section of this report.
 - 56 To assess differences in high school graduation plans by grade level, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed where grade level was the dependent variable and high school graduation plans was the independent variable. Results were significant: $F(2, 16628) = 75.33$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. Post hoc comparisons were considered at $p < .01$. Students who were unsure whether they would graduate high school were in lower grades than those who planned on graduating high school as well those who did not plan on graduating high school. We did not observe a significant difference between those who planned on graduating high school and those who did not plan on graduating high school.
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 - 58 The full percentage breakdown of educational aspirations for LGBTQ students planning to obtain a GED are as follows: 40.6% planned to obtain a GED only; 10.9% planned to complete Vocational, Trade, or Technical School; 15.6% planned to obtain an Associate's degree; 20.6% planned to obtain a Bachelor's degree; and, 12.2% planned to obtain a Graduate degree.
 - 59 Mean differences in the frequencies of reasons for not planning to finish high school or being unsure about finishing high school were examined using repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA): Pillai's Trace = .84, $F(5, 627) = 759.07$, $p < .001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p < .01$. Significant differences were observed between all reasons for not planning to finish high school, except we did not observe a difference between academic concerns and hostile school climate. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
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 - 63 To assess differences in high school graduation plans by absenteeism, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was performed where number of school days missed was the dependent variable, whether or not a student planned to graduate high school was the independent variable, and student grade level was included as a covariate. Results were significant: $F(1, 16311) = 344.24$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. Students with higher absenteeism due to feeling unsafe/uncomfortable were less likely to plan to finish high school.
 - 64 For purposes of analysis, we measured victimization by creating composite weighted variables for both types of victimization (victimization based on sexual orientation and victimization based on gender expression) based on the severity of harassment with more weight given to more severe forms of harassment. Physical assault received the most weight, followed by physical harassment, and verbal harassment.
 - 65 To assess the relationship between anti-LGBTQ victimization and educational aspirations, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was performed where severity of victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression were the dependent variables, educational aspirations was the independent variable, and student grade level was included as a covariate. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's Trace = .02, $F(10, 31496) = 38.80$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. The univariate effect for victimization based on sexual orientation was significant: $F(5, 15748) = 45.81$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. Post hoc comparisons were considered at $p < .01$. Those not planning to graduate high school experienced greater levels of victimization than all others. Those planning to only graduate high school, those planning to attend vocational, trade, or technical school, and those planning to obtain an associate's degree all experienced greater levels of victimization than those planning to obtain a Bachelor's or graduate degree. No other differences were observed. The univariate effect for victimization based on gender expression was also significant: $F(5, 15748) = 75.94$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. Post hoc differences were similar to victimization based on sexual orientation, except: those planning to graduate high school only experienced greater levels of victimization than those planning to obtain an associate's degree. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
 - 66 To assess the relationship between anti-LGBTQ discriminatory school policies/practices and educational aspirations, an analysis of variance (ANCOVA) was performed where experiencing discrimination was the dependent variable, educational aspirations was the independent variable, and student grade level was included as a covariate. The effect was significant: $F(5, 16320) = 30.01$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. Post hoc comparisons were considered at $p < .01$. Those planning to obtain a Bachelor's degree as well as those planning to obtain a graduate degree were less likely to experience discrimination than all others. No other differences were observed.
 - 67 The relationship between GPA and severity of victimization was examined through Pearson correlations. – victimization based on sexual orientation: $r(16217) = -.19$, $p < .001$; victimization based on gender expression: $r(16023) = -.22$, $p < .001$.
 - 68 To assess the relationship between educational achievement by experiencing anti-LGBTQ discriminatory policies and practices at school, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted, with GPA as the dependent variable, and experiencing anti-LGBTQ discrimination as the independent variable. The main effect for experiencing anti-LGBTQ discrimination was significant: $F(1, 16527) = 333.30$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$.
 - 69 The relationship between missing school and severity of victimization was examined through Pearson correlations. *Victimization based on sexual orientation*: $r(16222) = .42$, $p < .001$; *victimization based on gender expression*: $r(16026) = .42$, $p < .001$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
 - 70 To test differences in missing school for safety reasons by experiences of anti-LGBTQ discrimination at school, we conducted an independent samples t-test with missing any school as the dependent variable, and having experienced discrimination as the independent variable. Results were significant: $t(16376.37) = -39.94$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .60$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
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- To compare disciplinary experiences by severity of victimization based on sexual orientation and gender expression, two separate chi-square tests were conducted using a dichotomized variable indicating that students had experienced higher than average victimization, and a dichotomized variable regarding having experienced any type of school discipline. Both analyses were significant. Victimization based on sexual orientation: $\chi^2 = 640.28$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = .20$; Victimization based on gender expression: $\chi^2 = 573.74$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = .19$. Students who had experienced higher levels of victimization for both types were more likely to have experienced school discipline than students who had experienced lower levels of victimization for both types.
- 77 To compare disciplinary experiences by missing school due to safety reasons, a chi-square test was conducted with the variable indicating whether a student had missed any school due to feeling unsafe or uncomfortable and a dichotomized variable regarding having experienced any type of school discipline: $\chi^2 = 587.77$, $df = 4$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .19. Students who had missed school were more likely to have experienced any school discipline than students who had not missed school.
- 78 To compare disciplinary experiences by experiences of discrimination at school, a chi-square test was conducted using a dichotomized variable indicating that students had experienced discriminatory policies or procedures and a dichotomized variable regarding having experienced any type of school discipline: $\chi^2 = 559.16$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = .18$. Students who had experienced discriminatory policies or practices at school reported higher rates of school disciplinary action than students who had not experienced these policies or practices. Note further analyses demonstrated that these relationships between discriminatory practices and school discipline held even after controlling for peer victimization.
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- The measure includes 18 4-point Likert-type items, such as "Other students in my school take my opinions seriously."
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- 82 To test differences in school belonging by experiencing anti-LGBTQ discriminatory policies and practices at school, as analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted, with school belonging as the dependent variable, and experiencing any form of this type of discrimination as the independent variable. The main effect for experiencing anti-LGBTQ discrimination was significant: $F(1, 16529) = 3160.18$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .16$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.
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- Rosenberg, M. (1989). *Society and the adolescent self-image* (Revised ed.) Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- 86 Depression was measured using the 20-item Likert-type CES-D depression scale (Eaton et al., 2004), which includes such items as “During the past week, I felt hopeful about the future”:
- Eaton, W. W., Smith, C., Ybarra, M., Muntaner, C., & Tien, A. (2004). Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale: Review and Revision (CESD and CESD-R). In M. E. Maruish (Ed.), *The use of psychological testing for treatment planning and outcomes assessment: Instruments for adults* (pp. 363–377). Mahwah, NJ, US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
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- 91 To test differences in depression by experiencing discriminatory policies and practices at school, as analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted, with depression as the dependent variable, and experiencing discrimination as the independent variable. The main effect for experiencing discrimination was significant: $F(1, 16356) = 1701.16, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .09$. In order to account for experiences of victimization on the effect of discrimination on depression, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted, controlling for victimization. Even when accounting for direct experiences of victimization, the ANCOVAs revealed differences between students who had experienced discriminatory policies and practices and those who had not; thus, results of the ANOVAs are reported for the sake of simplicity.
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